On
Cross Channel

By George Henry Shaft
2003-2013 10th Anniversary Edition

In this way [he] illustrates, not the doubtful maxim
that to know all is to forgive all, but the unshakeable
truth that to forgive is to know.

He who loves, sees.
C. S. Lewis *George MacDonald: An Anthology*

SPOILER WARNING

Besides Cross Channel, this monograph and the accompanying commented script contains **unmarked spoilers** for the following works:

Kana: Little Sister
Family Project
Yume Miru Kusuri: A Drug That Makes You Dream
Tsukihime
Kagetsu Tohya
Higurashi no Naku Koro ni
Umineko no Naku Koro ni
Phantasy Star II
Final Fantasy VII
Final Fantasy VIII
Marathon/Marathon II/Marathon Infinity

NOTES

- This ebook contains hyperlinks. These may be blocked depending on your reader. Please check your settings.

- This ebook contains quotes from the game's script, attributed to the script file. It is not necessary to know which script files belong to where, but a reading key is still provided:

CCAxxxx Week 1/Misato Route
CCB0xxx Week 2/Common
CCB1xxx Week 2/Misato Route *(most of these are deprecated)*
CCB2xxx Week 2/Touko Route
CCC0xxx Week 3-4/Common
CCC3xxx Week 3/Kiri Route
CCC4xxx Week 4/Miki Route
CCD0xxx Week 5/Youko Route
CCD1xxx/**2xxx**/**3xxx**/**4xxx**/**5xxx**/**6xxx** Sendback
CCX0001 Week 7/Pre-Credits Finale
CCE0001 Post-Credits Finale

- This ebook contains Japanese porn game lingo in order to protect the innocent. If you know it, condolences. If you don't, Google it at your risk and peril.

I. A Challenge to the Reader

The world can go know the truth.
I have no need to know.
Merely having been loved, to me, it's--- more than plenty.
CCX0001

These are the words that come very near the end of Cross Channel as a challenge to the reader, a challenge to understand what has happened in the story. What the protagonist himself understands of said story is limited at best, complete nonsense at worst.

It's a difficult challenge to first of all *see*, because at a superficial reading, Cross Channel appears straightforwards: eight psychologically damaged people stranded in the soft sci-fi setting of an empty, parallel world with a

time loop, some of them learns of the settings' mechanisms, and one of them decides to send everyone back while leaving himself stranded in this parallel world, possibly forever.

But that is only the superficial reading, the blandest of interpretation. Underneath the simple character twists, the walls of text, the apparently nonsensical comedy and the explicit sex scenes lies a wealth of internal and external references which tell a very different story. A story about memories, repentance, visual novels, escapism, madness, and the positive influence all (yes, all) can have on a world, the real one, that is going even more mad than the protagonists of this story are claimed to be.

The true difficulty of Cross Channel isn't just in understanding how it is to be read, but in understanding that it needs to be read in specific ways in the first place. It's a great big puzzle where the reading keys are abundant, some obvious some less so, but where its *being* a puzzle in the first place is extraordinarily difficult to see.

And so, without careful explanations, merely telling the meaning of Cross Channel would be akin to a magic trick, the opening up of a sphere that appears flawless on superficial examination. Any reader would be well within his rights to claim sleight of hand, or in this case, over- or misinterpretation and given the ultimate conclusion, *agenda-driven* misinterpretation.

I anticipate right away that the reasoning remains *very* complex, and the evidence tough to interpret; many conclusions and much evidence will appear circular likely up until the very end of this monograph. Cross Channel is simply *that* complex, and therefore this monograph cannot be used as a reference book but rather needs to be read from start to finish, sequentially.

Fortunately, not everything is so complicated, and there's a practical demonstration that can be made to hopefully begin to show that my analysis is solid. And so, let's begin with proving mathematically that the time loop is no straightforward thing.

This will be the first hint that it does not exist at all, and that the story of Cross Channel is nothing of what it looks like.

I.I A Day is a Week

The color of evening leaves an impression stronger than any other time of a day.
Everything changes into a parallel world, a thing of hair-raising eeriness.
These are the hours of annihilation.
Hours when the world can be seen in multiplex.
After it has sunk, who can possibly ascertain whether the sun that in the next day again comes full of nonchalance on its face is identical to the one of yesterday?
What if every day, one piece at a time, the world perishes and passes away.
What if it is reborn along with the next day, and humans alone remain unaware.
There are no means to make sure.
Nowhere there is proof that the world of reality and the world that humans are aware of are one and the same.
CCA0017A

The idea of the world ending at sunset and beginning again at dawn is far from original to Cross Channel, but while discussing its origins and implications is besides the point of this monograph, the idea of the world being destroyed and rebuilt (almost identically) has a precise parallel in the story: that is how the time loop phenomenon is repeatedly described.

As Cross Channel concerns memories, one the many questions I had were: *is the time loop simply a metaphor for how time tends to wear away memories?* Because while the loop is supposed to erase these memories, in truth it does nothing of the sort.

If the loop is metaphorical, then *how metaphorical is it?* Could it stand to numerical scrutiny? Could the time loop be bound to a day, and this concept of end of the day signaling the end of the world not metaphorically, but *literally* ?

The time loop itself is rarely described, but there are hints. The way these hints are scattered will hopefully serve as a beginning of understanding how Cross Channel is read.

The first hint is that the loop takes place sometime before noon, on Sunday.

Miki: "Whatever it is, tomorrow at noon I want to be inside that hokora, so."
CCC4022

Because Sunday isn't even a half-day, this is a big problem.
CCX0001

The calculations took largely intuition from the themes of the story, so there's no real logical process behind them, but the result is surprising.

A full week is **168** hours. Assuming the loop at 12 on Sunday, that's **156** hours. A full day is **1440** minutes.

168/1440 = 0.10834

This number may appear random, but it's nothing of the sort: it's very nearly 108 divided by 1000 . These are not random numbers in Japanese culture at all. Compensating so the ratio is precisely 0.108, the number of hours in the week is 155.52: the time loop would take place on **Sunday 11:31 AM** .

Once is a coincidence; fortunately, there's another time point:

Miki: "6 o'clock in 5, 4..."
CCA0030

This particular time is given at the end of the first week, when readers are not intended to know about the time loop or the disappearance of mankind. The sudden coming of the evening is masked with Touko punching Taichi, which the reader is supposed to assume made him lose consciousness for many hours.

There are **1080** minutes in the day at exactly 6 PM/18:00. There's **168** hours in a week.

1080/168 = 6.43

Which is the number of days, meaning it'd end... about noon Sunday. It's close enough that it's worth compensating with the numbers found above (**155.52/168 *7**), that figure should be **6.48**, and therefore:
168*6.48=1088,7 meaning the time loop exits around **18:08**.

This all becomes even more obvious by taking 0.108 as the correct ratio. **1440** minutes in a day (whole), **168** hours in a week (whole):

1440*0.108 = 155.52 hours in the loop, corresponding to **11:31 Sunday**.
168*0.108 = 18.14 hours in the outside day, corresponding to **18:08**.

There are two separate points that are reciprocally consistent, tied by a ratio that is comprised of culturally known numbers, and the measurement units are consistent (one below than the thing being measured).

There are oddities, mainly, a whole day is turned into a partial week and viceversa; but given everything else is consistent, and with the rest of the analysis, it will not be particularly difficult to accept that the times were simply back-derived by the author imposing the 0.108 ratio[i].

It is possible to conclude that the time loop is an asymmetrical compression/decompression algorithm that turns a week into a day and viceversa, working on a formula of **time*108/1000**.

This explains one of the great many oddities in Cross Channel:

En route, the day grew darker.
There was this feeling of having walked for horribly long hours.
A countless number of hours.
On a path that ordinarily never takes more than an hour.
CCB0001

The reason why they felt they had walked hours is because they had left the camp site at around noon (although it uses the sunset graphics, the beginning of the story is described as early morning): the 11:31 and 18:08 points are overlapping. There is a discrepancy of nearly *seven* hours, to begin mentioning another oddity that will return with very significant consequences.

That's why at the very very end of the story it's necessarily before noon for Taichi when he broadcasts, but for all the other characters it's clearly late afternoon, after school. Which isn't in session on Sunday, with the simple explanation that it isn't Sunday at all.

Neither of these small empirical demonstration begin to answer all the questions of Cross Channel, in fact, it asks many more. For example: *is the ratio simply a random oddity? Does this mean the time loop does not exist at all? How and why is Nanaka connected to this phenomenon? How does Miki know it's six PM if the sky growing dark only means that the loop is coming?*

That last question is particularly interesting. There's no way Miki could know what time it is if all that's happening is the time loop, as she would need to not be reset herself at best, meaning she'd be voluntarily resetting, which would be out of her character. No one else is concerned about it, either, which is also strange.

Besides further hinting that the loop may be nothing of what it seems, this suggests Miki knows more than is apparent about the mechanics of what is going on, not just in the story, but from the viewpoint of analysis.

Hopefully, this small practical demonstration will serve as a first glimpse in what lies under the hood of Cross Channel. It's a far more complex story than it seems, where minor details bring big questions, and where little is what it seems to be.

And this was an application of basic math and lucky guesswork based on themes, which is straightforwards compared to some of the most complex multi-layered twists and turns that await ahead.

I.II A Primer on Reading Cross Channel

As a story that exists almost entirely in the parallels among characters, settings and events, truly describing how it is to be read without commenting every line of the script is next to impossible, while a simple script commentary would be borderline incomprehensible given the difficulty of seeing the forest for the trees.

That's why this monograph is accompanied by a complete script commentary, where nearly every line and sequence is carefully examined with sporadically pertinent commentary, but the reading of which is recommended only *after* this text.

This leaves the issue of describing all that in a more synthetic form for the monograph, while still giving sufficient *evidence* that the analysis stands; but just to show the size of the problem, the cross- and intra-script references number over 1500 in a text that is around 36.000 unique non-repeated lines. That's nearly one cross-reference every 20 lines of text!

To begin with I will illustrate a few examples that showcase *how* the story is to be read, to get readers in the correct mindset and begin to show exactly how Romeo Tanaka constructs complexity in apparent simplicity, as well as asking many of the questions that will be explored later.

When it comes to Cross Channel, what's to be kept in mind at all times is that while honesty is *rare*, lies almost without fail lead to greater truths. Almost everyone in Cross Channel is a more or less conscious liar: most of what is seen and heard is false, misleading, or otherwise not to be taken at immediate face value.

That does not make every character here malicious, however; with nearly no exception, *which* lies they use and *how* they use them are telling of a greater truth. This is often visible in how these characters *act* , rather than in what they *say* , but the contradiction itself can be as revealing, or more, than straightforwards truth.

I.II.I Miki Fatteningly Loves Junk Food

Let's take what will eventually be shown as the single most blatant liar in the story, except perhaps for the protagonist: Miki. At the beginning of the story, we are presented with the apparently irrelevant text of the memos of the purchases made on credit in the days preceding the story. Miki only ever buys a single item:

9/3
Vegetable Juice Health Pandemonium
110¥
Yamanobe Miki
CCA0004

The problem is that contradicts her actions. Miki *loves* junk food, so much that one of her most iconic images has her tossing out a mountain of junk food, and then suspiciously telling Kiri that there was no canned food at all. This is even more suspicious considering Tomoki is running around town picking food for everyone.

It could be possible that Kiri was keeping her in check, but that is put into serious question considering that most of the purchases there are dated to when they were at the Training Camp, and Kiri doesn't seem to like to go up and down the mountain; after all, there is only a *single* thing purchased by Kiri there, a parody of Dr. Pepper.

A simpler explanation is that Miki is buying whatever junk food she likes[ii], and writing down "super healthy vegetable juice". What's not yet seen is the motive, which is twofold: first, junk food costs more, and Miki is said to be very poor; in part it's to deceive Kiri, who comes to the shop with her at times and would then see the memos.

This will be even more obvious remembering how the very first barter with Taichi concluded with him agreeing to give her food *and* to become her slave, and even more so once we see who Tasaki is in relation with the rest of the world and cast.

Every single one of these details is important. Miki is a liar, and that's visible before the reader even hears a word out of her. Miki is deceiving

Kiri, and she was doing so well before she learns of the hokora system, or the time loop at all. Kiri buying a sweet drink plays in the *children have sweet things, adult have bitter ones* trope, which becomes nearly a catchphrase of Taichi's, who prides himself as a Young Adult who has tasted both.

The act of *stealing* itself is important, as we'll see how Miki has an imitative personality that steals behaviors and more from other people. For example:

Miki: "...my stomach..."
[...]
Miki: "I might die but... you two, you can't be fighting anymore... ngh..."
CCA0015

Which she took from Misato:

Misato: "...my stomach..."
Senpai, so weak to interpersonal relationship troubles, already felt groggy.
CCA0027

This is particularly interesting in that the imitative behavior is seen earlier than the behavior being imitated in the first place.

More importantly, this showcases all three points. Miki is lying about buying vegetable juice from Tasaki; this isn't an irrelevant detail, as it puts in doubt much more of what she does, even actions that are apparently honest; her actions do not necessarily have mean intent, as despite the apparent contradiction of pushing Kiri against Taichi, she seems to genuinely want for the two to make up.

More pertinent than answering the contradiction, at this point, is to further point out how damnably easy it is for apparently simple examples to spiral out of control. Going from Miki purchasing vegetable juice to questions that affect the structure of the entire story is barely a four-step process, one that involves the behavior and characteristics of no less than two more characters. Examples that are even just *this* simple are very rare.

I.II.II Taichi and Yutaka Never Forgot Each Other

Let's see another *relatively* simple example. This example concerns what Taichi erroneously believes to be his first few meetings with former bully Yutaka, who he claims to have forgotten. ...despite those events taking place not a few years after he claims to have killed him, but let's hold on that thought for a while.

In the first of their meetings Taichi is walking home and, on the way, sees someone tripping and falling down. Taichi's reaction seems obvious and expectable, but only appears to be so:

Taichi: "Oh deary?"
CCA0011C

While I will try to avoid largely irrelevant translingual commentary in this book (that will be for the script), here it's important to point out how the original line (あらぁ？"araa?") is recognizably female speech. Female speech is characteristic and typical in Japanese, but English requires much broader strokes to have similar effects, and that is why I've rendered it like this in the translation.

Yutaka tripping and falling never happens again, is never directly explained, nor is it ever mentioned that he has difficulties walking beyond the obvious; this would again seem a simple storytelling device, a way to kick off an encounter, but it is nothing of the sort. What happened is that Yutaka spotted Taichi, unconsciously recognized him, and manifested this unconscious recognition by repeating the last thing that Taichi had done to him: falling down.

After noticing him, Taichi also unconsciously recognized Yutaka and manifested this unconscious recognition by resorting to a girl's mannerism, as he was used to back in those days. This explains, for example, why Taichi soon becomes angry for no real reason: that is simply how he rationalizes the anger he still feels for Yutaka.

In a second scene, Taichi and Yutaka meet again in the streets, and this odd exchange ensues:

Taichi: "Mh... oooh, Tanizaki!"
Shinkawa: "Kounosu! You been in good spirits?"
CCA0018B

These odd nicknames are no random things.
Tanizaki refers to Junichiro Tanizaki. From Wikipedia:

"Some of his works present a rather shocking world of sexuality and destructive erotic obsessions; others, less sensational, subtly portray the dynamics of family life in the context of the rapid changes in 20th-century Japanese society."
Kounosu refers to a Japanese city. From Wikipedia:

"Kounosu earned the nickname "Doll Town" for its many "Hina Ningyou" (a type of Japanese doll) factories".

Taichi is calling Yutaka with the name of an author known to discuss sexual obsession and family issues; Yutaka calls Taichi by the name of a town known for his doll factories. Taichi used to be a Living Doll, Yutaka a sexual deviant. This is further evidence of subconscious recognition.

In the third encounter, Taichi is walking down the street and sees Yutaka lost in thought, gazing into the grove next to the road. Yutaka takes a step back, possibly putting himself into the path of a passing car, and then this:

Shinkawa is struck, tumbles down and dies. That was the origin of my psychological trauma.
CCC3003

The event itself doesn't happen, so this sentence has no apparent bearing on anything and would seem to be simply Taichi being Taichi... except for the reader oddly hearing the sound of the car apparently running Yutaka over, which may be just artistic license.

Maybe.

The scene, instead, has a point: the specific word used here has the meaning of *to run over with a vehicle*, but the emphasis is on being *knocked down* by the vehicle. By imagining Yutaka being knocked down by the passing car and killed, he is subconsciously reconnecting this event to those of years ago.

Of course, Yutaka was pushed down the stairs, not run down by a car… but he didn't die in either case. None of these non-events can have caused Taichi's psychological trauma, either, trauma which was caused more by Youko's behavior as consequence of what Taichi did to Yutaka and more than simply what he did to Yutaka. Therefore, the next sentence:

...and all other things of that sort that didn't happen.
CCC3003

...is absolutely correct. Nothing of the sort happened. The problem is that merely dismissing it as a lie (or worse, a pointless joke) is to miss many more important things. First of all, it's that Taichi is so terrified that Yutaka will be run over that he rushes to his help, even when the car incoming is moving very slowly and could definitely dodge him.

Actions speak louder than words: when faced with the choice at a purely instinctive level, Taichi refuses to let Yutaka die. Whether he ever wanted to do in the past, what will happen later in his life than this flashback that allows him to send Yutaka to his death is not something that has a complete hold on him.

And then, Yutaka has explicit memory loss, unlike Taichi... although in *his* case, it's actually all but a trope that memory loss is not *quite* the same as forgetting. His wound is self-described as psychological: does that mean he remembers too, at a level?

This example is simple in that it is relatively straightforwards: Taichi and Yutaka remember each other unconsciously. But that's still focusing on the one major detail. For example, just in the last scene, the driver of the car is not a random character, but one that is allegorically important; Taichi's aside into drinks is literally irrelevant, but the act of diving into nostalgia

and jokes while confronted with an emotionally impacting event (such as further memories of Yutaka) isn't; and that's leaving the multiple meanings of the copse in the woods that Yutaka was clearly associating with the Hasekura Mansion.

It's easy to be lead away in the examination of an apparently simple scene, though for the time being there's one thing that can serve as a focus: in a story that is led by what is apparently a time loop, which erases people's memories, people remembering *but not quite remembering* - especially outside this loop mechanism - cannot be taken as trivial.

After all, what's the point of having memory problems when there's a mechanism that resets time? Shouldn't that sound like a really stupid thing to write in a time loop story? It's in this skirting with bad writing that Cross Channel shows its real face.

I.II.IV MEMORY HUNTER!!!

And so, we have Taichi's claims on his own memory when faced with evidence of the time loop. This will not be something that will have as simple a reading as either of the above.

> Even were I, in the tough-simmered[iii] job I will eventually have, fall in the hands of the enemy and be turned into an invalid due to truth serum injections, I would never forget things even as small as the marriage promise to a childhood friend, for that is how much of a Memory Hunter I am.
> **CCC0007**

Got that? Now watch him moments later claim he's forgotten the moment of his birth:

> Things I don't have recollections of... I'd say there's the moment of my birth.
> **CCC0007**

...except he's wrong:

This is,
the recollection of the moment of my birth.
The recollection... of the moment... of my birth.
It was in my memories.
CCX0001

So he is a Memory Hunter who remembers even absurdly small details, except for his birth, which would make him less than a Memory Hunter; but he actually does remember his birth, which makes that second part false; except he doesn't *remember* that he *remembers*, making the Memory Hunter statement itself true, but irrelevant.

This thing about the moment of the birth isn't picked at random, because Taichi not only remembers it, he is reminded *repeatedly* of it.

In the scene mentioned in the previous chapter, Yutaka freezes looking at the copse near the road, and Taichi himself claims that'd make him nervous, as well. Setting aside how he goes in the closed space of the hokora in a wooded area without flinching, the metaphor is simple to guess: the area surrounded by trees in every direction is the Hasekura Mansion.

The copse next to the road is where Nanaka smacks him there routinely, an act so famous that it spawned even a minigame. Nanaka commits a sudden, violent, but ultimately non-fatal and in fact endearing act that ends with Taichi in a metaphor for the Hasekura mansion: the entire Zubaaan joke is about Taichi remembering his birth.

This explains why she keeps doing it. This:

Nanaka: "I've liked this ever since the first time I bumped into you!"
CCD0004

...is another way of putting this:

Nanaka: "I love you, Taichi!"
Nanaka: "Really, really love you. I think it's so good I had you."

Nanaka: "So much that if I were born again, I would want to have you one more time!"
CCX0001

So when everyone else begins doing it, mostly in his memories, is *that* just a joke as well?

And then there's this:

The memories that can be extracted from the dark rushing torrent of the subconscious were those, no more.
CCX0001

...which is also not true, because Nanaka is an illusion of his own mother based on his memories, which we'll see may as well be a holographic recording they're so clear - but that would mean there's way more recorded in there.

Except this still makes sense if Nanaka is a ghost, which she is, but perhaps only metaphorically(?). Which then leads to the time loop and back again to that question of the end of the last chapter, what's its point if Taichi remembers like this?

At the core of this remains the idea of Taichi the Memory Hunter (a running gag if I ever heard one!), the truth of which is very difficult to state simply. If he has memories, but no awareness of them, is he lying when he says he doesn't remember?

Conversely, if he has memories, but no awareness of them, *then what is the difference with not having memories at all?* And then there's that jokey aside about him ascending to a "tough-simmered" job, and his mind going lame because of repeated drug abuse.

This only sounds like a random joke until remembering the time loop, which is doing something very similar in a sense.

And don't forget that Zubaaan being a metaphor for his birth makes Nanaca Crash is a baby birthing simulator: even completely irrelevant fanmade minigames have their meaning completely changed in ways that sound absurd *just to state out loud*.

I.II.V What Exactly Is Taichi Remembering?

This web of apparent, real, and double-apparent lies merely questions what it means for Taichi, and perhaps anyone, to *have* memories. Bigger difficulties crop up when it comes to subtle reading keys, scattered across the story, that indicate how those flashbacks may not be reliable at all.

For example, it's easy to read the story thinking that Taichi's hair has been white since birth. And there's this line to hint that it has been:

A transparent outline shaded off... by silver hair.
CCX0000

This is how he describes *his* hair back before he became a Living Doll. Except that's not true:

And then, because of how my hair turned white overnight due to terror, there's how I am very resistant to sunlight.
CCC0011C

and:

The pigment in my hair was lost via yelling.
CCX0001

This discrepancy is irreconcilable, but not a simple lie. It actually plays a part in the first Yutaka re-meet:

Taichi: "Nope. Completely natural."
[...]
The hair on my head has been white for a very long while now.
CCA0011C

What readers would likely take out of this is that Taichi's hair has *always* been natural. But compare Yutaka's leg:

Shinkawa: "Me, I can't really move one of my legs."
[...]
Taichi: "That's a problem innit. Since when?"
Shinkawa: "A very long while. Let's say it's completely natural, mine too."
CCA0011C

The same terms. And it won't be the first time this similitude is used, either. What this means is that Taichi's hair and Yutaka's lame leg have the same age.

So when he said his hair was silver, was he lying? Perhaps his hair went from silver to white, absurd as it may be. But there's another oddity:

So shouts the gold-haired noble young man that's swooping down on me.
Wait, isn't that weird?
Because at that time the guy wasn't blond.
CCA0013

In this dream that is *also* a flashback to the Shakespeare play, Sakuraba is blond *before* he was blond. So this isn't the first time this odd misremembering would have happened.

Now, there's only two people who could deny that Taichi's hair was always white: Youko, who never says anything on the subject, and Yutaka, who never explicitly says he remembers him with that hair. For all we know, Taichi having that hair may have *hindered* his recollections as much or more than meeting him out of female clothing.

So: is Taichi misremembering himself always having that hair color? What caused this, if anything? How many more of these errors and lies are we going to find in the flashbacks? *And why is Sakuraba involved in the reading key for this?*

I.II.VI Sakuraba and Yutaka

Speaking of Sakuraba (...), there are characterizations and subtexts that exist exclusively in parallels between situations or, in this case, characters.

The presence of Sakuraba in the story is mysterious. Certainly he serves as comic relief, and he has history with Taichi, but I hope that given even just the above that readers begin questioning seriously even things of this sort.

Indeed he is nothing of the sort: Sakuraba may be among the most important characters in the story.

About two-three years before the beginning of Cross Channel proper, Taichi was on stage playing a... problematic performance of Romeo and Juliet with Youko. Following it, Sakuraba went backstage, attempted to have his way with Taichi (as seen in the dream referenced above with regards to the hair), which ended when Taichi slapped him with his hand, causing him a serious injury that lasts to the present day. This made Sakuraba generally harmless, if insistent in his friendship towards Taichi.

Setting aside whether he actually used his *hand* (as Taichi is known to carry a knife for what he describes as *necessary personal defense*), the injury Taichi caused cannot possibly have been that severe. A ruptured eardrum would heal quickly; more importantly, the Sakuraba family is wealthy and known to be fussy, as seen in the opening of the story. No expense would be spared to make sure their one son is in perfect health.

The persistence of the wound can't have physical origins.

So we have a wound of likely psychological persistence, caused by Taichi, to someone who has at least attempted to sexually assault him, on someone who will later begin to hang around Taichi as a friend (if not an entirely wanted one), after his more obvious mental issues have been, with that wound, at least seemingly resolved.

The parallel is imperfect, although in ways far less relevant than they may appear, but also very clear: Sakuraba shares a very similar backstory with Taichi as Yutaka's.

This has many repercussions. First and foremost, Sakuraba's rehabilitation is true: although he never seems to be quite "right" in the head, he is a sincere friend to Taichi. As will become apparent when examining Kiri and her route, Taichi never quite believed that Yutaka had rehabilitated, and is in fact one of the reasons he moves so hard (in the only ways he knows) onto her.

Second, this highlight Taichi as a hypocrite. Two people have done very similar things to him, but one gets treated as a friend, if reluctantly, while the other isn't. This proves that whatever problem Taichi had with Yutaka, it does not *end* in the abuse he received from him.

No more than Tomoki's problem with Misato is her being a traitor: after all, when Taichi betrays him by spoiling his manga, he doesn't shun him like he does his sister.

Or Kiri's problem with Taichi, because as stated explicitly by her and as hinted in a previous chapter, Miki is far more of a fake human than Taichi is. The existence of these *similar consistent and imperfectly parallel* hypocrisies demonstrate that this is no oddity or over-reading, but a point of the story.

Third, and more complex, it brings to the question of *what* caused this rehabilitation, and the strictly connected question of *from* what, exactly, they have rehabilitated. Certainly just being smacked upside the head or tossed down the stairs and being made to live with a psychological wound are odd ways to become healed; although perhaps, living with a foot or an ear missing is better than the alternative.

It's certainly oddly specific that Sakuraba would lose his sexual drive as a consequence of that event, a loss he even celebrates. These are questions that will reach the true heart of Cross Channel.

I.II.VII Kurosu Talk

As if the above wasn't complex enough, there are *entire conversations, monologues and scenes* that are not progressing anywhere near what they look like they do. These will naturally follow the major rules here, in that

they're not dishonest in ways that merely hide the truth, but that they will also reveal as much in the way they are posed. This is where the word most often used with regards to Romeo Tanaka's writing, *ambiguity*, comes to the forefront.

That this should be done is given by the story in a relatively early example. When Taichi is walking Yusa back home in an undeclared flashback, a lengthy conversation ensues where Taichi talks exclusively in euphemisms. A paraphrase is given, demonstrating he's not talking about anything remotely similar to what he seems to be.

This is easy to dismiss as a joke, but once close examination is taken to many other scenes, that's not the case at all. This is a reading key, and one of the most important (and delicate) of the entire VN, as not only will characters be talking about *nothing* of what it seems like, they will also be heard saying and seen doing things that have nothing to do with what they're saying or doing.

This becomes truly difficult when it involves words that sound perfectly innocent, but play off the ambiguity of Japanese itself:

太一「……おや？」
Taichi: "......mother of...?"
CCA0003

The original text is "oya". An absolutely normal exclamation of surprise, *except it also means "parent"*. This is what Taichi says when his mother vanishes in the first script she is introduced. So much for not remembering who she is, he's even more clear on the subject than with Yutaka! This ambiguity is interesting in that it would just as easily trip a native as a foreigner, in fact, it's possibly more likely that a Japanese native would be caught off-guard by this than not.

Also, did you notice when Nanaka tells that seemingly irrelevant story about her father she's actually talking in third person with that typical affectation of mothers around their children, especially babies? That entire

odd aside that sounds like it's about Nanaka's father is actually about her husband, Taichi's father.

Him making that kind of immature sex-related jokes tells much of the relationship between him and Nanaka, who's also kinda pervy, and on noticing that this is one of the great many things that Nanaka would have told Taichi when she was holding him back at the beginning means that this is first of all a memory, and second that it played a part in Taichi's earliest formative experiences.

But let's apply this to some scenes, starting with one involving Kiri.

Kiri is an easy character to dislike. She is quick-tempered, quick to blame Taichi for something that stays unclear for over half of the story, and is often found waving a crossbow in his face. This will be nothing so simple, but for the sake of simplicity, let's begin illustrating how *incredibly stupid* Taichi manages to act around her.

The scene begins in script CCC0026, and is one of the most iconic scenes of Cross Channel, starting with Kiri and Taichi fighting a battle of nerves, and continues with Miki and Taichi playacting a scene that, given I.II.I, should at least sound interesting to analyze, and ends with the Parachute Death Sentence on Kiri... or rather, Taichi.

This exchange takes place relatively early in the scene. Taichi is planning to take out the hand he put in his breast pocket (to scratch a nipple, nothing more). But the way he does it...

Empty hands mine, the kind you'd write kara-te.
CCC0026

The line, literally translated, reads "empty hands", written with the *exact* kanji for Karate. So it's translatable as "it's karate". But Taichi can't possibly mean anything lateral with it: his "martial art" is Kara**d**e - but that's not something Kiri would know, as in her route Taichi is shown more or less explaining this to her.

They flutter around delicately, showing my defenseless state.
CCC0026

Flowing his hands around (in a rather girly way, naturally) can yet look just like a battle readiness posture.

Taichi: "Our bluffs end here, Kiri-chin."
Taichi: "I sport weaponlessness on my side. So gladden me by ceasing meaningless bluffs on yours."
CCC0026

And these are easy to hear as threats: "I can destroy you with my hands alone". All it requires is for the other side to have a tendency to assume the worst in their interpretation of his words, which is a definite when it comes to Kiri. Taichi doesn't even come close to realizing what he just said to her:

When use words like 'gladden'[iv] I am in all respects cool.
My nickname of The Aristocrat of Pure Love is no dandyism.
CCC0026

The cross-talk is complete, and the consequences are precisely what they should be:

Kiri took out her hand,
and it was grasping a crossbow.
CCC0026

This is as straight-forwards and simple this kind of Crosstalk gets (and yes, *where* Kiri was hiding that crossbow is answerable, if not entirely definitely). Him avoiding this kind of things is the major difference between Taichi in the main Kiri route, and Taichi in the Kiri Sendback route.

A much more complex kind of Crosstalk concerns the kanji 揉 momu, which can mean "to rub", "to discuss vigorously", and "to be worried about". The reason for this is Japan[v]. Being that Taichi is known for his sexual pranks, that the kanji would come around. It does, but in ways that

are not simplistically about the rubbing. For example, in his monologue in an early unannounced flashback:

As a first year student, Machiko-sensei became our substitute homeroom teacher, and I repeatedly and insatiably harassed her until eventually I made her break down in tears in the middle of class and take a three day leave from work without permission, an event I still regret.
[...]
But if being hated was the result no matter what, then I wish I had given a further once-over to all that, though having those thoughts at this point means that I'm all but done as a person.
CCA0007

That last part is written with sufficient ambiguity that it can mean two things: "if the conclusion was me being hated, I should have rubbed her breasts more" and "if the conclusion was me being hated, I should have worried about my actions more".

The latter seems out of character only without having read the whole story beforehand: that he would subconsciously express regret is in fact part of his character development, wherein this regret comes to the surface.

When connected to the way that Taichi remembers Yutaka, shown above, it also shows how this regret for his actions has a long history. At that point, over a year in the past from the start of the story, on the day he meets Kiri, he might be yet to meet Yutaka again (the timeline is not very clear on that part), but already he understands he should regret his action.

Just not at a level that's sufficiently clear for him to understand, and certainly not enough for him to put it into action.

This joke is repeated laterally multiple times: Taichi doesn't just rub breasts or panties, but also 'goes over them' with critiques, such as in the Kiri sex scene. This gives enough space to attempt to reinterpret another small scene of the first week, that takes place right after Taichi goes "weird" and explicitly[vi] imitates the final boss of a computer game character.

Misato: 『Certainly when we first met you[r indescribable ugliness] did give me a sort of scare.』

[...]

I tried hugging her (how daring).

CCA0010

It starts with Taichi changing his memories *in real time* to make Misato's words be far more hurtful than they actually are[vii]. This, together with the hair thing, should immediately ring a warning bell; for the moment, it's important to remember that Taichi *really* is bothered by his looks. It may be the single thing that bothers him most about himself... that he'll speak of, at least.

Taichi being someone who resents gloomy moods, and who works to disengage them with sexual jokes is well established. And that's how this scene becomes sufficiently ambiguous to support two possible readings: Taichi is both faking being sad about his looks to give a facerub to Misato's boobs, and faking wanting to give a facerub to Misato's boobs so he can express being sad about his looks.

His crocodile tears may just be a crocodile facerub(?).

Now, this particular example doesn't add much to what was already seen before, but knowing this can help with another interpretative key: reading comedic scenes as serious and viceversa.

Think for a moment about Taichi being considered the cause of humanity's disappearance via his bringing everyone to the Cross World, and him launching a human-annihilating bomb not much earlier in this very scene. Especially how he calls it a dream, and how he turned into a *videogame character* for it.

We'll see much more on this subject throughout.

I.III A Story That Exists Only in Crossing

The point of the previous chapter and subchapters was to non-exhaustively showcase a few of the reading keys, questions, interrelationships and details that can only be seen through delicate inter-analysis of the story.

The difficulty in understanding and applying the reading keys, only a few of which were there seen, is what makes Cross Channel so difficult to read, far beyond the mere linguistic complexity of the original text[viii].

The good news is that answers for just about every mystery in the game exist: the nature of the loop phenomenon far beyond its odd relationship with a single day, the point of the hokora, the reason for humanity's disappearance, even what the hell is up with Sakuraba and his damn peanut persimmon seeds.

This includes many mysteries that don't appear to be so on first sight, such as what exactly happened between Taichi and Yusa, what is Taichi's problem with Yutaka, or even what genre Cross Channel belongs to. It's not science-fiction.

The bad news is hopefully already visible enough: this is going to be as difficult to understand as it is to explain, if only because so many things overlap and cross over each other so many times that it's virtually impossible to approach anything in any way that's remotely linear.

And then there's the nature of truth in Cross Channel to remember, which is a multi-layered troll where truth is lies and said lies are true in other ways.

I.IV A Simple Observation Error

I see, it's certain, a heterogeneous person that's always alone dwells in a parallel world.
CCC3025

For the description and analysis of Cross Channel I have chosen a thread which is simultaneously complex enough to touch most of the points of the story while still being relatively straightforwards to analyze, leaving the more complex interpretations once most of the interdependences have been seen.

This thread is a theory on reading the text, which is as follows: Taichi, a fragile personality already, has had a nervous breakdown, and is hallucinating a world where humanity has gone and time is resetting.

This would be difficult to see from the reader's perspective for multiple reasons.

First, there's the expectations from a Visual Novel. This is one of the expectations that the first week plays on in order to deceive the reader, as no VN reader would blink at not seeing or hearing anyone outside of the main cast of characters. The deception goes *deeper* than that.

Second, most of their perceptions are colored by Taichi's viewpoint, which is clueless and broken more than dishonest.

Third, the other characters are immersed into a very similar game of their own - if not playing Taichi's themselves - or viceversa, having him playing theirs at times.

This will not be the ultimate conclusion, as hinted, as even this lie will expose some greater truth; this is no mere simplistic cause-less madness or cleverly hidden plot twist that comes from nowhere. This is merely the simplest way to approach a text this ridiculously complicated. But proving even this little this is no easy task, though I believe between this monograph and the commented script that enough evidence is provided.

There are five major points that support the conclusion that Taichi is hallucinating, and that will be seen both as evidence of the conclusion and as analysis in general.

- **The world permits it.**
  The world of Cross Channel not only supports, it all but encourages people like Taichi to behave like this all the way from its basic structure.
- **Competing explanations are rejected internally, particularly the scientific ones.**

They're not only a complete load as far as reality, they are debunked *internally*. There is evidence that strongly suggests these explanations are not to be taken seriously, but are intended as red herring - with the usual caveat that they will highlight something else.

- **Taichi is crazy enough for this to work.**
  Not just because of a highly questionable test, but because Taichi has specific psychological characteristics that would make this fantasy coherent and possible. This, in particular, will reconnect to the idea of memories.
- **There are reasons and means for the rest of the cast to play along.**
  They have reasons to ignore the presence of all mankind and keep repeating their behavior, whether they play along with Taichi intentionally or not.
- **The author has a clear goal in mind with this.**
  The most important one! There is a point that the author is making with this story being a pretense[ix] in this precise way, or to reconnect to the beginning, these lies exist to illustrate yet greater truths.

The first three are relatively simple to illustrate in a somewhat straight-forward manner, even if there will be many questions, parallels and oddities that won't have immediate answer, such is the nature of the work being examined. The fourth will enable delving deeply into cross-characterization, while the last will require even more careful meta analysis.

II The Worlds of Cross Channel

Even if the concept of parallel universes is to be ultimately rejected, it is the *way* in which this will be that is important; if this is a lie, it should illustrate a greater truth. It shouldn't surprise then, if even after claiming that parallel universes in the quantum scientific sense are rejected, it's shown that there are *still* what could be called "parallel worlds" in Cross Channel.

Not just parallel but also nested: some contain others. At times it's obvious: the world of inner Kamisaka wholly contains the world of Gunjou Institute; at times it's not: the world of the Hasekura Mansion now only exists in Taichi's memories. And, theory says, in the end the Cross World will only be the crossing between the real world and Taichi himself[x], and be largely contained within himself.

There are, as deducible, four major worlds to examine in Cross Channel at this point: the city where this takes place, the inner side of Kamisaka; the school Taichi goes to, Gunjou Institute; the world where the eight end up in, the Cross World; and the world of Taichi's distant past, the Hasekura Mansion.

II.I A Deserted City: Inner Kamisaka

The City of Kamisaka is a city somewhere in Japan, unspecified but far away from the larger cities. It's single city separated into two, with very little reciprocal access: a train and a very impractical mountain trail. There is an impassable mountain ridge all around the inner town. The main part of the city is outside this ridge, and is never seen nor technically relevant.

It's a relatively wealthy town, thanks to a nuclear power plant that made the inhabitants suddenly rich, although poorer parts of town still exist. The interior city is where Cross Channel takes place, and it's by all definitions a very quiet suburban town of little bustle and activity, with its true commercial heart residing in the part of the city outside of the ridge.

Although it has oddities such as a beach but no pier or port, and no hospital is ever mentioned, it's still functionally a self-sufficient self-contained world with most everything a late adolescent could want.

The vast majority of the people in inner Kamisaka work in the outside city, or at least, not in the inner city itself. In other words, by day, the inner city of Kamisaka will be functionally uninhabited.

This should immediately strike as odd: why set a story about the disappearance of humanity in a city that is normally deserted anyway?

This becomes an even more pressing question if we take the mathematical hint and assume each of the in-game weeks are actually single incomplete days: the only time one should expect to see the vast majority of people to return would be well after work hours, and considering the train commute, that would be at a time after six PM - *after* the "loop" has already taken place.

There are plenty more suspicious conveniences of this sort. The store of reference for the characters is owned by a railway otaku, who opens the store and leaves in the train to who knows where during the day.

Characters can therefore simply put things on a tab and *conveniently* never have to deal with any living being. Since the story has credit notes for nearly a week beforehand, so the shortest that one could expect to go before having to pay the tab would be well beyond the scope of the single week the story should take place in.

An example that merits particular attention is the disappearance of the dog Combat, who dwells near Taichi; the dog is known to uproot his guard chain, and simply stroll off as he pleases. If Combat had been taken, then we should see his chain abandoned on the ground when Taichi goes there.

Instead, the chain is very conspicuous only in how it is unmentioned, despite the chain being the *only thing* that would confirm beyond doubt that he's anything but away from home at the moment when Taichi goes see him. This won't be the only time when a hint is given by absence, and all will point in this direction.

In fact, similar to Combat being missing not being an issue are the missing characters' parents and guardians. First of all is Taichi's guardian, Mutsumi: she lives in a dormitory, and is almost never home; Taichi can talk all he wants about how she's disappeared and never shows up, but for all the reader knows, we're simply seeing several of the many days in which she's not home.

This also explains why there's no food in the house, except for a few potatoes: she's never home and doesn't keep things stocked.

It's certainly suspicious how both Youko and Mutsumi *conveniently* both have the habit of leaving sandwiches in bags (with a note) as breakfast and lunch, as seen in flashbacks.

Kiri's parents are similarly almost never home, and will be a minor if important plot point; Youko lives in a personal apartment; Misato's father is in jail. The only ones that remain with possible families are Sakuraba, Touko, Tomoki and Miki.

There will be time to examine everyone's story in detail, but for now, suffice to say that *no one* really explicitly says their family is gone in unambiguous terms, *not even Miki*.

The inner city of Kamisaka is a big playground, one that begins deserted and that would change imperceptibly if it were to become actually and completely empty. That this was chosen as a setting is at the very least incredibly suspect.

II.II Your Tax Dollars at Work: Gunjou Institute

An unspecified amount of time before the beginning of the story, unspecified "crazy people" began appearing. The hows and the whys of this are never made explicit in the story[xi]. The government of Japan decides to institute a never quite clarified National Test, which attributes people with a Conformity Coefficient.

The test is so poorly handled that the results are often leaked, with the people who fail it often subjected to societal rejection and further humiliation. And then, and at that number's unappealable judgment, they are sentenced to the Gunjou Institute[xii].

Gunjou is a "school" is only so in name only; it's in fact a guarded open-air prison built inside what is little more than a slightly bigger open-air prison of a town, there to hold the people Japan would like to forget more than as a serious education or even re-education institute.

It's the way it's constructed and run that is most relevant here: *a colossal governmental clusterfuck* doesn't even begin to describe it. Almost nothing of the way it is created and run makes any sense, although this nonsense is internally consistent in ways that amount to specific political criticism of school and government that is found elsewhere in Tanaka's writings, especially Yume Miru Kusuri[xiii].

As Taichi explains and exemplifies, regulations in Gunjou are functionally ignorable. Touko never comes with her uniform, and she's merely reprimanded by frustrated and powerless teachers for it. The cafeteria sells meal tickets hours in advance, with nothing but empty threats and bureaucratic reminders half-heartedly tossed out to rein this in.

Taichi and Tomoki print photographs of an empty room and paste them in the club room's windows, but this pathetically transparent masquerade is never noticed for at least an entire year. In fact, let's look at that for a second. The masquerade is paper-thin, easily noticeable, shows something that is *completely empty* when it isn't, demands passerbys not to have ears not to notice what's going on inside, makes it difficult for those inside to spot the outside, and goes unnoticed or ignored for at least a year.

That last is another hint at how little people care; as more evidence of how little rules are enforced, no one seems to be bothered at the Club Room having game consoles, phone chargers and more inside, as long as they're not spotted inside of it outside of allotted hours. Both the nature of the deception and what it is hiding will also come into play.

Taichi himself, despite his Conformity Coefficient should qualify him for special surveillance, is allowed to roam freely, including walking the grounds in a gas mask, and calling in pizza on delivery. When Taichi simply climbs up the gate and leaves[xiv], all that happens is that the guards come and give chase; and they fail, despite all Taichi does is make a beeline for the Tasaki Store, which is near Gunjou.

When he returns, the gate is *still unguarded*, and the hint is that most if not all the guards on duty are doing useless rounds of the town. No penalty is ever seen given to him for this behavior, possibly under the threat of "becoming unstable" if his whims aren't satisfied[xv].

In fact, the only penalty we hear from him is when he was suspended for his sexual molestation of one of their teachers[xvi]. Which is absurd: being sent to Gunjou is all but a jail sentence, and they give out *leaves of absence from school* as punishment?

Gunjou having Summer and possibly Winter vacations is itself puzzling, but not even close to the madness of Gunjou actually having *school hours at all*: students live with parents or host families, and are expected to come on time and leave, all without any adult supervision whatsoever that is ever seen or heard of.

These are the most dangerous young people in Japan, and yet they're allowed to roam early morning and evening-night in a city that should be full of families and commuting workers at precisely those hours!

The insanity triples when considering *how many* of the Broadcast Club members alone are allowed to live without guardians at all; Taichi, being Gunjou's #1 Illest, being allowed to live effectively alone is entirely ludicrous.

There's also a quota of physically disabled teenagers, the politically correct term for which is Persons Operating With External Impediments; this to contrast the Persons Operating With Internal Impediments, persons that these disabled boys and girls will find themselves having to deal with. Mixing the physically lame with the mentally infirm sounds just like a splendid idea(!).

And who knows what kind of political mess happened to make Gunjou open for *electives*, despite how it is seemingly the only school of the sort in the whole of Japan.

The teachers of Gunjou don't seem like the best of the bunch, either. Of the three named teachers, Machiko is a naive newbie who can't handle Taichi's *Sex Pranks As Friendship Making* rules; Mammoth is a giant known for corporal punishment, though whether it is exaggeration is unknown; Sakakibara is a geek, a recluse, and a self-declared misanthrope, and there's hints in Another Story that he simply can't understand Taichi's internal time discrepancies, meaning he doesn't understand Taichi's rules either.

This reaches levels of borderline comedic exaggeration when realizing that the whole point of Gunjou is wholly self-defeating: if these people have

difficulties adapting, then taking them from their places of origin and tossing them in a state-sponsored penitentiary out in the sticks is *by far* the stupidest thing that can be done for them.

Of course, idiotic doesn't mean unrealistic, and this is not far from the kind of stupidities that the histories of governments the world over are full of. Nor is this kind of stupidity outside of the typical behavior of the government and institutions in general inside of the rest of the Visual Novel or Tanaka's writings.

There's an ultimately unsubtle anti-governative if not anarchical thread running underneath the story, one which we'll see more in depth by the end of the book, and this makes the possibility of these inconsistencies being little more than the result of an incompletely developed setting quite unlikely

Many of these oddities play roles, in fact. The first important part of the setting of Gunjou lies precisely in how students are allowed freedom to the point of excess: being inside the building more or less on time, avoiding excessively disturbing classes and staying more or less on the premises seems to be all that's demanded of the students.

The rest requires merely not getting caught, and since the guards don't seem particularly invested or sharp, that's comparatively simple. In fact, for someone as quick of mind and feet as Taichi, the guards may as well *not exist at all*.

The other important part lies with the residents of Gunjou themselves. As deduced above, inner Kamisaka would be physically deserted during the day, and meeting a living soul at that time would be a rare event indeed.

Gunjou is not physically uninhabited; it is, however, emotionally so.

II.II.I The Inhabitants of Gunjou

Though unexplained in its origins, the Conformity Coefficient does seem to have an effect: people with higher CC[xvii] don't seem to take into

consideration much of the world. The most detailed example given is about a girl in Taichi's class:

Taichi: "If you contact the other party while conforming to their rules, you can construct conversations."
Kiri: "...how do you learn... these rules..."
Taichi: "Powers of observation are needed. Right, then... for example."
Sitting in a seat at hand was a girl with glasses and mood dark. I approach her.
Her and I will, in fact, be trading.
I clap my hands.
The gaze turned my way.
I hold a slice of pizza in front of her eyes.
Girl: "....."
She showed interest.
She tries to take it.
I take it a bit farther, and she ceases trying to take it.
That is her sanctuary: a radius of 30 centimeters of distance.
Girl: "....."
She ponders, then the girl sets out the lunchbox. Towards me.
Taichi: "Okieeeh!"
I took one Tamagoyaki,
and, in exchange, offer the pizza.
Girl: "..."
Munch, munch she begins to eat down.
Taichi: "And, well, sort of like this."
Kiri: "...what was that now?"
Taichi: "Bartering is foundation. For her."
Taichi: "After that, she's fine with just her own world. Therefore, all that happens outside the radius of 30 centimeters she shows minimal interest in."
Taichi: "She has similar symptoms to a Savant syndrome as well, an abnormal ability to make simple calculations. Ask her about what day of the week it will be on a date several centuries ahead, receive an immediate exact reply."
Taichi: "Maybe she's just lost in the contemplation of an ocean of numbers."

CCC3007

This girl has three very important characteristics.

- She ignores everything beyond a certain (physical) radius;
- She is good at a single thing, math-related, though what she can do doesn't appear that interesting itself (dates and simple calculations);
- She can only be interacted with by those who know and follow her rules, which can only be deduced by observation.

The other example given relates to Miyuki, an apparently perfectly normal girl that is yet seriously ill:

Taichi: "I don't know the details, but, it seems that when she starts feeling excessively lonely her symptoms come out."
Taichi: "She has External World Agnosia. The outline of the world becomes fuzzy and unclear. Kind of a drug trip. She's the type that'd fall from the rooftop easily."
CCC3004

As well as what triggers her attacks:

Taichi: "Come now, it's a school, aren't there hours where we're alone as a matter of course? If all around us there were healthy people they'd worry about it but... everyone's just doing what they can about themselves."
Taichi: "Those hours of solitude, what Miyuki hated most, they're everywhere."
For example, after school. A classroom with no one inside.
For example, the courtyard. The sports track left depopulated.
For example, the classroom. There are people, but no one to have a connection or a fellowship with; it is a space of disintegration.

All these are important details, especially the last one: *solitude exists psychologically, not necessarily physically*[xviii]. Even being surrounded by people it's possible to be alone.

If all this is possible, then someone who only considers people in a radius of acquaintances, who suffers in solitude yet seeks it in apparent contradiction,

has difficulties separating memories from reality and is highly prone to déjà vu to the point where most days blur together and the subjective flow of time is incoherent, is a master of words as long as it's shallow superficial verbiage, and can only be interacted by those who understand that friendship is their foundation among other rules is not unimaginable in the world of Cross Channel.

What would the world look like to him if he had an attack like Miyuki's? Well, as Tomoki says, Taichi with his 84% *lives in a different world* from Tomoki and his 15%. When understood, all is explicit.

This idea of broken person having further breakdown is especially interesting to see considering these lines, added to the console version:

She didn't say one thing to us, who gathered in large numbers in that club room.
And that taciturnity may, just perhaps, have turned some emotion upside down.
There was a time when something moved inside of me.
Inside my heart it may have been, but I can't explain this well.
In my opinion, the limit was close to being reached, I think.
CCC0002

There are further statements that clarify the emotional distance of the people at Gunjou:

What we have here, at Gunjou Institute,
are clamorously wild classmates,
and corpse-like classmates.
Hollow boys and empty girls that cannot see but their own world.
The ones who can even establish the most basic and upfront of conversations are but a handful.
Standing here and there, entertaining no emotions, the guards.
The world of this classroom is a wild, ferociously
manic caricature.
CCB0003

or

Taichi: "Back then things were quiiite a bit snug. The number of 'Experts' was really low, that's why." [* 'Expert' = person in which the basic emotions (happiness, fear, sorrow, pleasure) are present.]
CCC4019

These people are physically and emotionally distant, and yet, the guards and teachers are even *more* so:

But, and everybody knows,
that to heal someone who has a Conformity Coefficient above control value there is but one way:
beneficial contact with people.
In other words,
there is nothing to be had but reciprocal touches.
Would frightened teachers and guards become partners in that, however?
There's no way they would.
There is no choice but for the wounded boys and girls to share hearts and minds with each other.
CCC0011A

If these people were to suddenly disappear, very few would actually feel them missing. When we look at the cast of characters in detail, this will be even more obvious.

However, there is an oddity that is strangely compatible with the idea of *students disappearing*:

The number of guards is pretty low.
There are always around ten standing around, but today it's only two.
It's gotten hot so, maybe because everybody's mentally cracking up, there's many not attending.
CCA0022

Touko, along with the students, is therefore far from the only person who's been unable to stand the heat of Summer; both the students *and the guards*

seem to have difficulties. This is compatible because of how it's described: people slowly but inevitably disappearing, heading towards the nonexistent.

And if the cause of this (the heat) were to be *somehow* forgotten, this would become as if a mysterious phenomenon were to cause the gradual disappearance of mankind...

In short: the people of Gunjou are distant, unwilling or unable to communicate. The world of Gunjou is as psychologically empty as inner Kamisaka is physically so, and in the right circumstances, they would both be similarly physically empty.

If someone were to snap and decide to play a big game of pretend where humanity is gone, it would be an extraordinarily easy feat to accomplish. It would also be either unnoticeable or ignored by the official people around them.

However, there's one further consideration needs to be given: the nature of this "Class X", where Miyuki is sent, which is not quite clear.

Class X is different from the other classes.
It is the final destination for an ultramarine of Gunjou.
But it is yet the happiest of all classes.
CCC0011A

This makes it sound like it's a class internal to Gunjou, but that's not necessarily so; Taichi tells Kiri he thinks Miyuki would be sent to a proper institution, and Tomoki more or less jokingly mentions a research building. Nothing more than this wild speculation is known.

However, it would certainly it would be consistent with this theory if it were simply a special classroom where people like her, stuck in a perfect fantasy world, could live these fantasies without (perhaps) hurting anyone, all while the uncaring world walks on and leaves them behind. A Gunjou-within-Gunjou, perhaps?

And with it, the suspicion that this isn't the simple meta-joke that it looks like:

So, the first years' classroom.
The position of the posters is the same, but that's just accidental.
The Flowers aren't here.
I try looking in another classroom.
Not here.
Here's the same.
Even the inclination of the books is similar.
Next then.
Even the position of the blackboard eraser is the same.
It can be said that there is identity, can't it.
But it is assuredly coincidence. Assuredly it is.
CCC3018

II.III No Man's Land: The Cross World

The Cross World itself is only a few steps removed from the dead world that is the reality of Kamisaka and Gunjou. It's a world that begins Monday and ends early Sunday then loops, taking all progress and all people's memories with it - or so it should.

It's also repeatedly stated that no one exists outside of the main eight, even outside of the valley, although whether this is true is never anything more than asserted without evidence.

Whether because of despair, escape from reality, or something else, the focus of the story is about building a communications antenna, left abandoned in the year before the story takes place, in order to send an SOS. It's a Sisyphean effort, given the time loop; the rebuilding of the antenna takes a week - and the Law of Narrative Economy as well as Misato's intentional behavior are the only things that prevents this from being transparently suspicious - and on the morning of Sunday, when the broadcast takes place, all will be reset.

This Cross world is connected to the real world via an unexplained 'gate' that only Taichi can see, laid next to a hokora in the mountains that is also

the only known point unaffected by the time loop. More interestingly, according to the very final scene, Taichi's SOS somehow reaches the real world despite the gate being said to have closed.

With the hint that if Taichi were to let himself be reset, it would reopen. Not the only oddity on this, of course.

II.IV The First Eden: The Hasekura Mansion

The world of Taichi's past was a closed garden, by himself described as an Eden of sorts, a place so far from the world that it's a fairy land in and of himself. The world of the past is as difficult to establish concretely as the faerie itself, because Taichi's memories are very unreliable.

As in the example in chapter I, it's uncertain whether Taichi's hair was white from birth. And yet, it's this hair color - as well as an equally suspicious pattern in his eyes - that gets him invited to the Tea Parties.

These events are never described if not in passing, and when they are, not with particular fondness; the people of the Hasekura are sweet, but forgettable:

In that miniature Garden of Eden, my relationships were with people as thin as air itself.
...I seem to have even forgotten their faces.
CCC3030

Even this means relatively little given Taichi's memory is less than reliable.

The ones that work at the estate as well as the elegantly refined lords who reside in it held the possibly noble, possibly childish hobby of playing with human dolls, which to me held tedium but not unpleasantness.
CCC0000

The description here is quite important, as will be seen in the conclusion: the Time of the Doll was *boring but happy*. He liked the routine and he didn't dislike the tedium of the events. Or at least, he says he does.

His actions seem to contradict this: he finds himself chasing the only person in the mansion who seems to treat him for what he is, a man and not a girl, and spends many hours reading books he doesn't understand just to share the same space with her.

Later in the history of the Mansion, the Hasekuras are ousted[xix], the "toys" like Taichi and Youko are left behind, and new, violent men and women take their place. With the arrival of Shinkawa the father, Taichi is restored in the role of a Doll in an actually unclear role, perhaps as torturer. Finally, with the arrival of Shinkawa's son, he begins being the target of bullying and derision.

This continues with Youko and Taichi forging a contract, and in the space alleged to be *a single week*, trained and planned to murder fourteen people. It ends with Youko unable to go through with it, being horrified with Taichi's ability to do instead, and being the one rejection that truly breaks Taichi, generating what he calls *Denatured Consciousness*.

There is naturally much more to this, and many things that are suspect. Going from a rather girly man to mass murderer in a single week is ridiculous at the very least. Also, Yutaka survived, meaning his memories in there are continuously dubious.

And the greatest oddity of all: if both her and Youko have been repeatedly abused, *why are both*[xx] *Youko and Taichi virgins when they have their Alter Ego sex?* This is something to be kept in mind.

II.VI Conclusions on Worlds

The worlds of Cross Channel here briefly seen share several characteristics. They are **wealthy**[xxi] and wide playgrounds, where Taichi is allowed to roam mostly **free** provided he stays within its comparatively loose limits, and are largely **devoid of interaction**, at the very least meaningful ones.

One thing that might not be immediately clear from this first analysis is how *repetitive* life in these worlds is. Kamisaka is strictly ruled by business hours; although the way it is run in Japan is said to be particularly grueling, most all have experienced the grind of collective school; life in the Mansion

was distant from everything, had consistent daily routines with little variety, and demanded Taichi to keep company with vacuous people in vacuous conversations for years on end.

His life is a *repetitive daily grind*, where associating dates would become difficult, where one day blends into the next, where the only difference between days is which document you're filing or what empty topic you're emptily moving your mouth on about.

Taichi doesn't necessarily dislike this, but this repetition itself already looks like a time loop: that it would eventually crystallize in a *literal* one can be hypothesized, a crystallization completely compatible with the crystallization of the lack of meaningful interactions with people into a world completely devoid of life beyond the closest friends, constructed by a conflicted desire to *escape* from the miserable reality of estranged friends.

And with the escape, the reminder of who the story is targeted to: as a Visual Novel, the foremost users of which are, traditionally, the recluse.

If Taichi were to be considered a recluse not at home, but in his own virtual reality, a big game of pretend where everyone but maybe his close friends are gone, the world of Gunjou and Kamisaka is a world where he could go on undiscovered for lengthy periods of time, and even if anyone there did manage to find it, there would be few who would so much as even remotely care.

This sounds even less implausible when remembering that, as of writing, Cross Channel has been simply setting aside and ignoring the existence of mankind for *ten years* without anyone realizing it's just a perspective trick.

Paradoxically, the lack of close examination shown to what should be one of the highest profile products in its niche becomes one of the strongest arguments for the plausibility of Taichi's behavior: if Romeo Tanaka can get away with it in a story, despite a high profile and hundreds of thousands of pairs of eyes on his writings, someone glanced at only casually by disinterested parties can very easily do far more for far longer.

The analysis here is very far from exhaustive, but that is expectable given the intrinsic difficulty in attempting to analyze *any* element in this story more or less independently. Even just these four worlds, apparently separate and only loosely related, are in reality interconnected in multiple ways at multiple levels, only one of which is the simple straightforward timeline.

The sequence in which the worlds progress is at least as interesting as the worlds themselves. The progress is between two major worlds, the Hasekura Mansion and Kamisaka, but also between two different versions of the major worlds. The sequence is as follows:

Hasekura Mansion -> Shinkawa-run Mansion -> Kamisaka and Gunjou -> Cross World

The repetitive, closed world of the Hasekuras gave way to the darker world of the Shinkawas; Taichi escaped this world to find himself in the repetitive, closed world of Kamisaka and Gunjou, which then gave way to the darker Cross World.

This duality repeats even in smaller scopes[xxii]:

- The Hasekura Mansion goes from Taichi as a playmate for children to Taichi as a companion for adults;
- The Mad Mansion goes from Taichi as a witness to the Shinkawas joining with Taichi as a participant and then vengeful victim;
- Kamisaka and Gunjou go from Taichi as a loner, with only Youko, to the whole Broadcast Club;
- The Cross World goes from the apparent happiness of the first week into the madness of the rest.

Even among these there are parallels: the Tea Parties with the Broadcast Club, the madness of the further weeks in the loop with the increasing madness of the Shinkawas. Taichi as an onlooker becomes Taichi as a participant, involving him into things whether he likes it or not.

The first main conclusion is that the two main worlds (Mansion and City), at every level, are but variants of each other. It's certainly a very odd escape

that ends in a place virtually identical to the one escaped.

That's because there's always something positive that can be found in these darker worlds. Yutaka and Taichi could never have become friends without the Shinkawas coming in, even if that ended in tragedy, and Taichi claims that the Cross World is the place where he can live in peace, finally unable to hurt anyone - though the precise truth of that is very much still in question.

These are positives, but far from net or clean ones. Not all agree, of course: most of the cast seems to resent the Cross World, whatever it is for them, but more interesting than most is Youko.

Youko rejects all four worlds at some level. She wants to escape the Hasekura Mansion, can't stand the Shinkawa-run Mansion, dislikes the world of Kamisaka where she can't be alone with Taichi, and even the Cross World is unbearable to her with anyone but precisely the one person she wants. The friction between the two was inevitable just from their approaches to the worlds they live in[xxiii].

The second conclusion about all this is that the devolution into a darker world is *inevitable*.

Downfall is inherent in Eden.
It has been like this ever since the original Eden of mankind, therefore, I believe it to be a divine providence from which there is no escape.
CCC3025

Whether by Taichi's hands or not, each sub-world falls into a next one. Remembering the culprit in Miki's route being an apparently disappointing *coincidence*, noticing that odd coincidences also drive Taichi's life all the way from the start should immediately cast suspicions on whether the Invisible Murderer was really true random chance or something much more specific.

And as with the forgetting and the basic setting, if it was nothing more than chance, nothing more than narrative necessity, why would the writer

stupidly attract so much attention to it?

This cyclicality and inevitable fall in congruous world is similarly of great interest in a story ostensibly set in a time loop: while the difference between the Hasekura mansion and Kamisaka appear greater than those between any two of the seen loops, the similarities are at least as significant. And given how incomplete (and potentially unreliable) the description of the Mansion, the similarities may actually be even more.

The comparisons in how the worlds end is very interesting in this: the Time of the Doll ends with the nice but not exactly engaging Hasekuras running away and being replaced by very few[xxiv] monsters; the Time of the Broadcast Club ends with the nice but not exactly engaging mankind vanishing, and being replaced by just seven people with whom Taichi doesn't have the greatest of relationships.

III Cross Channel and Science

Over the course of the story, multiple serious and less-serious scientific and pseudo-scientific speculations are made by the characters over the events and some elements of the story. As with most other elements, to take all these as jokes or as serious explanations is to be deceived into a quick answer, and fail to see the truth.

Although the pseudo-scientific explanations may be more credible than them, the point of this chapter is to demonstrate how not only the apparently scientific explanations are nonsense on a real-life scientific sense, which wouldn't be very relevant to a fictional story, but to point out that they are *intentionally erroneous*, that the author did not intend these as explanations for Cross Channel at all and that he left reading keys to hint in this direction.

First of these is given early on, and it is so absurd it's difficult to even take it as a reading key in the first place:

> On the very downbeat of the sneeze, the launched glob of mucus fired onto to my uniform with a nuzzle velocity superior to even that of the Shinkansen (no, seriously).

This mightily adhesive fluid was drawn by the fired bullet and dragged from the girl's nasal cavity, and this connection that normally would break had fortunately held, thus completing the bridge.
CCA0013

In this context, this isn't worth commenting much further as it's all but obviously a complete load, from the speed of the sneeze to the obvious conjectures onwards. He might as well claim that, say...

I am extraordinarily resistant to sunstroke,
because my hair is white.
CCC3015

...and there lies the reading key: *Taichi is not kidding*. He truly believes this is possible. *None* of the scientifically sounding explanations he makes throughout the story stand up to scrutiny any more than these, even if it takes a little more knowledge than the trivia that sneezes don't have that kind of speed or that hair color is irrelevant to sunstroke at best – and white hair may in fact make things *worse*.

There are three major scientific or at least scientifically-oriented explanations in the story:

- The explanation of the origin of Taichi's eyes;
- The Sakakibara Diary, showing that this is a different world;
- Youko's speculation about the worlds crossing and parallel universes.

Although most of this sort of commentary will be left for the commented script, some of these will be interesting to analyze line-by-line.

III.I A Blatant Troll: Taichi's Eyes

Taichi's odd eyes, and what he can do with them, should remind the more seasoned visual novel reader of Kinoko Nasu's universe and its Mystic Eyes. In Nasu's writings, Mystic Eyes can hypnotize, petrify, or perceive the very concept of the death of things. They are often outside of their owner's control, and at times, may be so powerful that they risk driving their owner to madness and death.

Taichi's "Mystic Eyes" allow him to see at night, thanks to a special pseudo-tapetum structure that he can switch to at will, as well as to decide in which world himself and anyone else is[xxv], if only at specific points of unknown origins that exist in both of them.

Alone, the description should be suspiciously exaggerated; even more so when Taichi is described to 'switch' his eyes to nocturnal mode like this:

Take a deep breath,
close the eyes, and impose strong pressure on the eyeballs with the eyelids.
In the depth of the crystalline lens of the eye, an image like a switch
toggling its state surges out.
The thing itself doesn't happen.
I am just intentionally accelerating what the eyes would, slowly, normally
do at the moment of a sudden change in brightness.
CCC3012A

Forget the 'switch', very Kinoko Nasu anyway; he describes his eyes as naturally adapting to darker light with time. That has one very big oddity: *that's what eyes normally do.* There is absolutely nothing strange about this outside of the emphasis that Taichi puts on this.

And now, let's see now the explanation Taichi gives for this all goes. These are taken from script **CCX0001**.

A few months after birth, the central nervous system switches over
completely from the mesocortical pathways to the visual cortex, a period of
time taken for the development of peripheral functions suitable for the
outside world.

This is purely ascientific, to the point where it's disprovable with a trip to Wikipedia. The mesocortical pathways and the visual cortex are entirely unrelated. No switching of this sort happens at any time after birth [xxvi] .

The rod cells and the cone cells, likely undergoing optimization had, at that
time, acknowledged their host as a creature of the night,
deciding to increase the amount of the rod-shaped cells distributed.

These things undergo no "optimization", it is all decided in gestation. There's no distribution of cells after birth. If he had a higher *distribution* of rod cells than cone cells, all his sight would become is slightly better at night and slightly worse during the day. Total number of cells wouldn't increase.

Note the different terms "rod cells" and "rod-shaped cells" for the same word.

The unspecialized cells around the retina create a pseudo-tapetum lucidum.

Setting aside how this is physically impossible, and how there's no such things as "unspecialized cells" in the eyes after birth - as if rod and cone cells were pseudo-stem cells! - *this does not flow with the above in the slightest.* Tanaka sometimes joins thoughts less than elegantly, I must note[xxvii], but this borders on the contradictory. Even accepting a post-natal distribution of rod and cone cells, these nonexistent *unspecialized* cells aren't in the description either. This simply doesn't follow.

Overlapping errors, maybe, or the cellettes failing to lose their transparency as they merge into the glassy body, maybe.
What it was, I have no idea.

Now it has gone from a selection in response to the detected host into the possibility of errors, or stuff that sounds like it would make him go blind and nothing else. In not five lines, the explanation has changed three times. Note the terms "cellettes" and "glassy body" for more in a moment.

The result being that I was endowed with a structure where the light entering my pupils would be twice overlapped on the reflective cells.

No amount of vision cells can amount to a tapetum lucidum, which is a completely separate structure. This isn't even *vaguely* within the realm of the plausible.

Structurally speaking, it is identical to what dogs and cats have.

Also, these eyes had higher sensitivity for things moving than ones still.

Motion sensitivity is a *mental* thing, not something of the eye. Interesting to examine this idea that he has a dog-like or cat-like motion sensitivity, as according to this report , "humans are 10-12 times better than cats at detecting motion in bright light".

There are many more oddities visible when examining the report [xxviii] and comparing with this, but this one is the most immediately relevant: the *only* time Taichi is seen detecting motion this way is relatively early, at the end of the first week, when he spots Youko on top of the water tower near noon, *in broad daylight* .

This entire explanation is ridiculous, incoherent, disprovable with little more than a trip to Wikipedia, and *ludicrously over the top* in a way that may remind readers of a certain kind of delusion prone to this kind of nearly-delirious pseudo-explanations about nonexistent superpowers.

It's still more plausible than Star Trek-style tech-the-tech-with-the-tech technobabble, I'll admit, but not by much.

Still, so far, all this would simply either categorize the sci-fi in Cross Channel as leaning towards the "*fi*", in ways that either cast suspicions on whether the writer even knows how to read hiragana; but there's another possibility: Taichi is intended to read like a vaguely plausible moron in love with the big explanations but unable to understand what he says[xxix].

The hint is sadly only partially visible in the translated text, which showcases how *obviously ludicrous* this is. There's one part of the original text that's not exactly replicable in translation: the furigana over the text. Furigana[xxx] is still used sporadically in the translation, although pretty much entirely for jokes, but the use the author makes of it here is to further the insanity that the literal text already is.

Furigana is used to provide a reading key to complex words, and it's used a *ludicrously* high amount of times in this passage, which is especially

noticeable for Tanaka as outside of the odd *really* big word, he tends to make use of furries[tm] largely for jokes himself.

And that what drew my attention: the different words, both with furigana, for *rod cells* and *rod-shaped cells*. This despite the terms having no practical difference, as both listed as synonyms on the Japanese Wikipedia page! This is oddly obtuse, and very much not in line with the rest of the writing.

It's just the beginning. The next oddity is in the word used for *tapetum* 輝膜 koumaku. It's not unused, but it's uncommon and not in any dictionary nor found anywhere in Wikipedia, unlike the more common word 輝板 kiban. This one might have just been a stylistic thing, but not with the above and the below.

It's the next line that is the strangest of all. It starts with an English word ('error' is in katakana), which is already weird considering the high amount of tough Japanese vocabulary this far; it has the pluralizing suffix -tachi applied to the word 'cells', which is highly suspect as far as scientific accuracy goes[xxxi]; and on the furigana front, 硝子体 vitreous body is given as reading key not the correct reading *shoushitai*, but the simpler synonym garasu-tai, which reads *literally* "glass body".

This is inconsistent even with the rest of the lines!

It's this kind of almost caricatured last-strike that most smacks of intentionality, as if the author was intentionally overloading the text with increasingly implausible and overwrought pseudo-scientific garbage and seeing just at what point the reader realizes he's being taken for a ride.

Unnecessary redundant terms, not even the slightest trace of adherence to plausibility, lack of flow that borders the internal contradiction, and even inconsistency in the use of furigana: everything in this explanation screams not just lack of scientific precision, but *intentionality*.

And all this comes not lines before the challenge to the readers that opens this monograph, further hinting that Taichi's explanations are not only not to

be taken seriously, but that they should all but discarded offhand. Furthermore, this serves as a good reading key that anything scientific within Cross Channel is to be examined very closely before being accepted.

Things are not as simple as that, however.

If his eyes are still to be taken as strange, he may simply have a particularly good night vision and accompanying poorer day vision: he has difficulty telling the details apart, and his sensitivity to motion may simply be a mental compensation for this poor eyesight.

This would be consistent with his sight being animal-like, according to the report above: "from 20 feet away, normal dogs could distinguish the details of an object that a person with normal vision could differentiate from 75 feet away".

As for his tapetum-like structure, this went unmentioned in the explanation, but Taichi is said to have a strange pattern in his eyes. This would be simply explained as some kind of degenerative, if non-serious, eye illness. His pseudo-eyeshine/tapetum, which shines in low light, is in fact nearly a perfect shoe-in for Leukocoria (***link comes with a minor graphic warning***) .

There's also one more thing not to forget when it comes to Kamisaka: it's said there's an excess of useless light fixtures in there. The graphics don't really show this, but the city being much brighter at night than it needs to be is a very good possibility, meaning that his “night eyes” are nothing more than the city's lighting itself.

This is not only real, it's discoverable via the characteristics given with relatively little research as well, furthering the idea that this is entirely intentional.

The question remains, and will return, *why did Taichi construct this borderline demented pseudoscientific explanation?*

...all without forgetting that if his eyes are to be taken as to be still the *cause* of all this, or at least, be part of what is *used* to lead Taichi to the Cross World, the simplest explanation is that he is more or less consciously deciding what he sees, and is selectively ignoring the rest.

Ergo he sees the seven, but not mankind.

There is long to go before this is anywhere near proven, but it is certainly a path worth investigating.

III.II Irrelevant and Suspect: The Sakakibara Diary

Although not "scientific" per se, the largest piece of evidence for the Cross World being an alternate world from the one of origin for the eight is the diary of Gunjou professor Sakakibara. Or, at least, what is *alleged* to be the diary of that professor.

Quoting the diary extensively for this analysis is rather pointless, as the problem with the diary is immediately evident: there is currently more evidence in the few thousand words until now regarding my theory than there is in those pages that would support the concept of an alternate world.

In fact, his diary is easily proven as suspicious to the point of contradiction.

The curry bread in the cafeteria hasn't spoiled, meaning it's been brought in not a day or two before the beginning of the time loop; this would require the diary to end only a few days before the start of the story. If so, then the disappearance of people has a very simple explanation: *it's Summer break!*

Why would it be suspicious for a dormitory of a town and the associated school to have little presence of life at all during the day? Sure, there's a beach there, but all but the poorest there would head outside, especially since most of the inhabitants are said to be largely wealthy.

If this had instead happened many months before, then there's that flashback to a year before the story starts, with the first meeting with Kiri: at that time, he was out of classes for no apparent reason, and so were Tomoki, Miyuki *and Kiri herself*.

Tomoki: "Our class became self-study, 's all."
CCA0007

But was it random? Remember the Cafeteria scene flashback:

It's gotten hot so, maybe because everybody's mentally cracking up, there's many not attending.
CCA0022

Since that scene appears to be relatively early in the Summer, there's your explanation.

However, there's still inconsistencies: the bread would never have lasted so much as a week unless the microorganisms had vanished long before, which would've probably been noticed.

Still, what caused the members of the Broadcast Club – murdered by Taichi, if we take Another Story to be the events of this alternate world – to post up bills at Tasaki in the week in which they should have been in the training camp? Given what those bills hint at, as seen at the beginning of this monograph, that can't be a coincidence.

Also, regardless of its origin, Miki manages to clean the blood fairly quickly in Week 1, meaning it's at least relatively fresh. That can't be caused by a lack of microorganisms.

There's many more inconsistencies. For example, Sakakibara never ever mentions all the people on the Internet among whom he should be famous, which is stretching the credibility of narrative economy well beyond the necessary. And *no one in the entire world* has ever seen the "instant" of disappearance? Absurd.

Him speaking of discarding his hobby due to no one appreciating it anymore is credible, yet it's basically something that Taichi had said previously to himself:

Could these people continue the act of creation when the results are works of art that no one will ever look at?
CCA0021

Even more odd is how he would single out Taichi as unchanging. The girl who can't see anything beyond 30cm of radius has changed in this situation, then? It'll be matter for later detailed investigation, but *no one* in the Broadcast Club seems to be impacted by the end of mankind in the absolute slightest as far as their behavior goes, which is part of what makes it suspicious of whether mankind is gone at all.

Then again, them not changing in reaction to a new situation means they have difficulty conforming; has no one explained to Sakakibara what *having a high Conformity Coefficient* means?

In fact, the only one that is close to changing in response to the disappearance of mankind is Miki, and that's only after the reset. This is even more suspect than most unchanging behaviors.

One more oddity is the censoring of the dates. We see Taichi add silly and irrelevant footnotes[xxxii] to his diary, but we don't see the month and week? Now, censoring the dates this way is certainly normal; however, that only makes things far stranger.

In Japanese, X represents error/mistake, and O represents correct/right; this is thematically connected, just remember how Taichi himself represents the 'X' in more than one way.

Normal way of censoring it may be, but with this thematic connection, it sticks out like a sore thumb. It's suspiciously odd that Tanaka would employ it. Besides, Miki tells him to read from page 52; who tells someone to read a diary from the page instead of *diary entry* and therefore *date?*

Next, the diary doesn't quite gel with Another Story. Assuming AS is this World B in which they've fallen, not only is it much more different world than theirs - or is it, given the disconnect between "first day" and "second day"? - it's one that doesn't have an antenna, hasn't had a Training Camp,

and has apparently not even had a Summer break, as everyone's at school just days before the possibly dying, possibly hallucinating Taichi B has a close encounter with the Parallel 8. Also, in there, Taichi meets Sakakibara, but if he kills him, this happens in the streets, not at school[xxxiii].

The final oddity that's strictly diary-related is how, of all the people, it's *Sakakibara*'s diary that is brought out. This is suspect as Sakakibara used to be Taichi's homeroom teacher, and Yusa's at least until the year prior; he was the one who assigned Taichi the Exchange Diary, which then leads to the scene with Yusa where she has an exchange diary with her.

Curiously, Taichi suggests Yusa to do it with the teacher, which is even odder considering he claims to have done it with someone from a higher grade, likely Youko[xxxiv].

Since Taichi is said to keep a diary right at the beginning of that scene with Yusa, and in fact it's one of the many ways in which a fake continuity is kept between the present and the undeclared flashbacks, it's very credible that Sakakibara's exchange diary assignment was what kickstarted Taichi's diary keeping.

It's therefore at least suspect that *his* diary of all things would be brought up, especially if Taichi's suggestion wasn't random and Sakakibara allows students to keep the exchange diary with him. Being a geek and a recluse, what Sakakibara writes on the diary to exchange with his students may well be entirely made up for the purpose. In fact, part of the assignment may just be to think about what the student would write in a fictional scenario, and this creative exercise be what spurs Taichi into the pretense of being a writer.

Even more curious is the Wikipedia article on exchange diaries : apparently popular in the '90s, but *among students* . Sort of an odd assignment to give, certainly.

Perhaps, as Taichi says:

> Hobby's Bishoujo Figurines so he's sorta near the end, tho.

CCA0013

And then, we get to Miki. Miki's a liar, this we already have evidence of, but here things get way worse. She acts incredibly suspicious before and just after presenting the diary. First, let's see an oddity that's only apparently unrelated.

III.II.I The Curious Case of the Clock

The math behind the Time Loop connecting half past eleven of Sunday and six PM in the evening are solid enough to make evidence that attempts to contradict it a required examination. For reasons not immediately clear, evidence technically contradicting this deadline is given in large quantities right in the morning of this last Sunday.

- Taichi's alarm clock, on Sunday, is set for 10AM;
- Miki and Taichi spend an hour "kissing" (...);
- They spend no 30 minutes to an hour in the bath, as that's how it'd take a freezer in Rapid mode to chill a bottle of ramune;
- They spend another 30-40 minutes on the common part of the school commute;
- Miki would need another 40-50 minutes to reach the hokora;
- ...and as much to come back, around 20-30 minutes before the reset

However, this would put the loop between 14:30 and 15:00 on Sunday! The puzzle is trivially solved: Taichi's alarm clock may be set for 10AM on Sunday, but that's not necessarily what wakes him[xxxv]. If he wakes up at or around his normal, 7AM[xxxvi], the timeline snaps to order easily, considering my estimates are all intentionally high.

It's not the complexity of the puzzle that's of interest, but its *presence*. This is a wake-up call for the reader. This ought cast further suspicion on the already weak evidence of the diary, and doubly so on Miki's behavior, which is highly suspicious and would remain so even if Miki wasn't introduced as a "wizards of words", and whose honesty wasn't already highly questionable even before getting into the details of things.

III.II.II Miki's Suspicious Behavior Around the Diary

Not only are the contents and the credibility of the diary under question, even whether it's Sakakibara's is not quite confirmed. Let's see some quotes from script **CCD4025**.

Miki: "Please read this. Because it is the easiest to understand."

Easy to understand, of course, does not necessarily mean *true* and that goes double given Miki. This, along with the clock, should serve as a warning. Same how she tells him to start from a specific page - a page with a very suspicious number, too. He never reads what's gone on before, which may have been anything.

But it's at the end of the diary that things get really really strange. Miki subtly evades *all* of Taichi's questions on the nature and origin of the diary:

Taichi: "...is this... Sakakibara's diary?"
Miki: "A long time ago, when I was investigating all around... I discovered it."

The answer is just "I discovered it"; not "yes". The yes *could* be implied, as that is the Japanese way, but that's just the first evasion:

Taichi: "...where was this?"
Miki: "There is one in almost every house. That one is just the easiest to understand."

Taichi's question is almost borderline stupid: where would he think the diary was except Sakakibara's house? And yet, Miki dodges the answer *again*. Her jumping to conclusions on it being an alternate world, especially given the posted bills, is already seen; but that's almost logically coherent compared to what's right afterwards:

Miki: "And, maybe, Sakakibara-sensei was also killed, I think."
Miki: "Because a corridor in the Institute was stained with blood."
Taichi: "...was it... me?"

A corridor is stained in blood, and therefore it has to be Sakakibara? That's jumping to conclusions at the very least. It's even more bizarre given how Another Story doesn't so much as confirm as make a very big fuss out of the blood in the corridor being Miki's... provided anything there even happens, regardless of canonicity.

There's warning bells (or lack thereof) shortly before, Miki's behavior is suspicious throughout, and multiple things in it don't make sense. And then, there's perhaps the single oddest coincidence in the entirety of Cross Channel - and that, by the end of the book, will be saying something:

Miki produced a thick diary book.

A completely innocuous sentence, except, back in the first two weeks, when Taichi is writing his diary:

I open the thick diary book.
CCA0012/CCB0012

The term used for both sentences is 分厚い日記帳, which is distinctly different from what Taichi usually uses as diaries (college notebooks). This term is never used outside those two times, and the second week is in a script that is almost entirely copy-pasted from that first week one.

If this isn't intentional, then coincidence is too good for its sins: this would be one of the biggest writing errors in the whole of the VN.

And if it's intentional, there are *no* hints that this should be taken as troll: there is no reason to doubt this near-throwaway description of this diary, unlike its nature or contents.

This then returns back to the timeline oddity. By attracting attention to the timeline, Tanaka stresses another point: Miki *did not have time* to go anywhere special to take that diary. Although the map is unreliable, there *are* houses between the path to the hokora and Gunjou, so Sakakibara's house may just have been coincidentally right there; but the very presence of the puzzle, and all the oddities that surround this diary, make it much

more likely that the reason she managed to find it and bring it with so quickly is because it's one of Taichi's diaries, and it was enshrined in the hokora all along.

Consider Sakakibara was plausibly the origin of his diary-keeping, and that Taichi is not unknown to writing fictitious dialogues and setting involving others, such as the Touko dialogue that serves to cover up the undeclared flashback, mentioned above[xxxvii].

As for why he'd do it, he was simply ranting about a pseudo-postapocalyptic world setting until the page prior, then began writing what would, say, Sakakibara would be doing if people began disappearing. This will be shown to be even stranger when considering the thing about the curry bread proper, which is a far bigger can of worms than it looks.

The only real obstacle to this is that Taichi doesn't recognize his own handwriting; but oddly enough, just the previous route, he didn't recognize the notebooks in the hokora because of handwriting, but because of their *style*. He will recognize their handwriting, but only in the route *after this!* There's at the very least plenty of convenient coincidences here.

All this, ironically, would mean that it *indeed* is easiest for him to understand with that diary, although what Miki probably meant to do was to attempt to disassociate Taichi's possibly nonexistent murderous self into someone else.

So the diary is at the very least highly suspect, and the entire conclusion to the Miki route is shrouded in half-truths, evasions, wake-up calls (or lack thereof), and plenty of contradictions; the idea that the Sakakibara diary can prove - let alone conclusively - that this is an alternate world cannot be taken seriously.

Although jumping the gun at this point, the idea that the world they live is not the world they belong to has a very different implication should the world they live in *still be the real world*. And there's still that thing about Miki attempting to dissociate Taichi from a "Taichi of this world". *What sense does that even make?*

III.III Are Worlds Crossing? Youko's Explanation

This is it: this is the mother of all scientific sounding explanations, the one that's easy to take as the true explanation for the backstory events of Cross Channel. Naturally, it's nothing of the sort; it's not even *pseudo*-scientific, let alone an explanation: at best it's groundless speculation that, like all blatant non-truths, will only serve to illuminate something greater.

These quotes are from script **CCD00021** *unless noted.*

Youko: "The possibilities are two."
Youko: "First, the axes believed linear of two worlds have intermixed, a condition in which they can reciprocally perceive each other... very SF."

SF is kept as acronym for reasons we'll see - sci-fi may not be the explanation, but that's not all SF stands for.

Two worlds,
twisting, overlapping... crossing.
Taichi: "Worlds are overlapping, then something abnormal has happened, right?"
Taichi: "Hmmm... and in that case, what about our world of origin? If it has been preserved as it was then---"

An odd assumption to make, given it's not supported at all by what Youko just said. If the axes have intermixed, and reciprocal *perception* is possible, why would he jump to the conclusion that somehow they have *moved* ? Perception being motion *will* be one of the theories, but Taichi jumping the gun is at the very least suspect, and the oddity doesn't decrease when considering that he's desperate for the 'real' world to still exist, unchanged, somewhere.

His hopes are real, although not in the way he expects, as it often is.

Youko: "The other one, what we see is the way that the world in which we lived in has ended."
But she negated the easy salvation by one half.
Taichi: "....."

Taichi: "Reciprocal interference across Many Worlds is impossible... or was it. It's quantum mechanics."

This is the major purely scientific issue. Reciprocal interference across Many Worlds is neither possible nor impossible, as MWI is not actually science[xxxviii]; therefore, there is nothing in MWI that strictly permits or prohibits this interference: the existence of Many Worlds is pure conjecture. Might as well claim that God did it for the evidence there is.

This can all be dismissed as irrelevant, yet once more, as it simply being *not science* does not impact its being *science-fiction* or, at least, an explanation. And here comes the in-universe troll to change that:

To speak of quantum mechanics means to bring in Dirac, but I have never read the original book.

Paul Dirac indeed had plenty to do with quantum mechanics, but he didn't have much to say on its interpretations. In fact, the quote "shut up and calculate" is falsely attributed to him, and while not conclusive it at least suggests that he didn't much care for interpretative studies of Quantum Mechanics.

And then there's the elephant in the room: why bring him up instead of the more famous Erwin Schrödinger, with whom he shares a Nobel prize?

And is a quantum mechanical interpretation even applicable to this situation to begin with?
Taichi: "...the one you said before, the SF one... what was that?"
Youko: "You must absolutely and necessarily choose between A and B. Which do you choose?"
Taichi: "...half and half I guess. I don't know which choices they are."
Youko: "Indeed. Our lives are built over choices without number."
Youko: "For example, on setting out to walk, from which foot do we move forwards?"

That's actually a really bad example, given most people settle on a single one for the overwhelming majority of their lives. It's like wondering which

thumb goes on top when you clasp your hands: the dominant one. But whether intentional or not, and on this one I lean towards the latter, it's not too important.

Youko: "Which side dish of rice will we begin eating from?"
Youko: "Choices take place in a more microscopic world as well."
Youko: "Choices without number take place each and every single instant."
Youko: "And the world is shaped by these choices."

Assuming she's not deliriously stating that choices create matter, this vision is expanded in an earlier "dialogue"[xxxix] that was added for the console versions:

Youko: "As long as all sorts and all kinds of laws exist in there and remain eternally unchanging, the order of common-sense acts permitted from the beginning is not the outset, in other words, what humans do is not what brings about physics."
Youko: "...it's only what is allowed."
CCD0009

It's a diabolically contorted way of saying it, if I say so myself, though *human acts do not decide physics* is the key here. Youko is leaving a big damn thread dangling, never inspected if not outright assumed: how is the world shaped by choices when these choices are merely what is *permitted?* This question leads straight into the next: *who or what* "permits" them?

Youko: "Extremely deterministically so, as well."
Taichi: "Deterministically..."
Youko: "For example, Taichi selects A. Taichi has the memory of choosing A."

A deterministic worldview is one in explicit contrast with more classic interpretation of Quantum Mechanics, such as Copenhagen. In Copenhagen, an *observer* is required, or rather, the status of things is determined only upon this observation. Schrödinger's Cat is the thought experiment of reference, although it was actually intended to show the absurdity of this.

Youko: "Yet simultaneously, on that same world axis a Taichi that has selected B also exists."

According to MWI, the possibilities exist in the same superposition, which gives an *appearance* of collapse by splitting a single decision per universe; the "world axis" thing seems just confusing, but then again, that this wouldn't make scientific sense is kinda the point of this exercise.

Of course, there's the thing of how Taichi B exists only as a pure thought experiment, not even raising to the level of hypothesis or theory.

Youko: "It does not imply the existence of parallel universes, however..."

The problems get even more serious. The existence of parallel universes is very much implied in the Many Worlds Interpretation - it's in its *name* for crying out loud! It's like she's implying that the superposition somehow stays on the same universe, and it could be switched by the observer somehow. This is interesting, and in fact technically true in Cross Channel; it's just *not MWI*.

Youko: "Merely that in the general concept of Dirac, perception of the world of Selection B from the world of Selection A is not possible. And vice versa."

Now we get to heart of the troll. Dirac, as mentioned, had not much to say on the interpretations of Quantum Mechanics, and specifically, he says nothing on the subject that I can find (or expect to, given everything else).

In fact, he had absolutely nothing to do with the development or study of MWI at all. Dirac is repeatedly mentioned (in fact, *no one else is*), while the more relevant and obvious ones like Schrödinger and Everett are never touched upon. MWI is brought in via determinism and worlds splitting, but then the relevant experiments and people are not mentioned: this alone is suspect.

Thing is, this is *intentional on the author's part*. Readers were warned that Taichi is prone to making this kind of mistakes:

Baudelaire said this:

『God is dead.』

[...]

『Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.』

These are Kierkegaard's famous words.

CCA0015C[xl]

The first quote is from Nietzsche, the second is the conclusion of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logicus-philosophicus*. These are blatant errors, intentionally humorous, and laid into the single hardest bit of Japanese in the whole of the VN: a completely ludicrous, typo-riddled, apparently meaningless mess that appears to exist exclusively to mercilessly mock via subversion this kind of pretentious and ignorant writing[xli].

Specifically, there are two attribution errors that are entirely compatible with the error being made in this scene. As with the first scene of diary writing hints that the Sakakibara diary is not credible, the second one hints that this scientific explanation is *intentionally* nonsensical on its face.

Youko playing along to Taichi's mention of Dirac is particularly troublesome: while Taichi's an ill-educated idiot, Youko is supposed to be some kind of supreme genius, capable of figuring out the hokora system with literally no hints whatsoever.

She either does this intentionally, or is literally as clueless as he is.

Not that there should be need to prove that there's people in Japan doesn't know what Schrödinger's Cat entails[xlii] outside of experiencing some of their media, but there's further additional material to reinforce this intentionality:

Miki: "...hmmm, do you have some knowy knowy on the Everett Interpretation?"

Taichi: "Dunno. Is that a friend of the Copenhagen Interpretation?"

CCZDXC

The script also ends on a (very suspect) Cat in the Box experiment, just to drill down the intentionality. The script is interesting given how, despite being intentionally humorous, it's probably a *more credible* an explanation than anything here; humor is serious, serious is humor.

Let's continue dealing with the main script.

Youko: "Conversely, if there is capability of observation, transfer between the worlds becomes possible."

This continues Taichi's odd assumption, and said out loud is outright ridiculous: *perception* is very much not *transferring.* What she's doing is conflating MWI and Copenhagen, that is, assuming that since the world is deterministic, then the perception of a different outcome means an automatic change in the world.

This bears a quick example to show exactly what she's saying. In a purely deterministic view, if choice A leads to choices 1 and 2, while choice B leads to choices 3 and 4, then picking B forever closes out choices 1 and 2.

But if it were possible to somehow observe - or rather, *quantically re-entangle with* - a world where 1 has been picked, then despite having memory of picking B, the history of the world would now necessarily record that A has been picked.

Youko's theory is that the world(s) are deterministic, and split constantly and inevitably around choices, at least; however, there could exist an *observer* that could observe a different world, and that observation would *immediately* cause a shift due to the deterministic nature of things.

This is not only a conflation of two theories, but a leap in logic. As it turns out, there's more hints of intentionality of error:

Youko: "Similarly to how the world is a completely different thing for those who could see in the ultraviolet,"

Youko: "one capable of observing many worlds is capable of existing in those two worlds."

Youko's insistence on *sight* is very suspect; it's as if she knew this was somehow caused by Taichi's sight, and is merely insinuating instead of stating it for reasons not quite clear. Taichi himself says that he decides who is and who isn't in the Cross World by switching his eyes - *is it obvious yet?* - but that Youko would've figured this of Taichi and the setting yet never saying this explicitly is odd even for her.

Further on the point is why she'd bring in the idea of being able to see ultraviolet: this is actually not unconjectured in humans, Aphakia is said to permit it, and human tetrachromacy appears not impossible.

This leads back to the first section, about Taichi's eyes, and this is no coincidence; however, as deducible from that, neither of these two explanations work anywhere near how Taichi's eyes are described to, not to mention fail to account for his pattern, unlike the explanation I hypothesize.

If with this Youko wants to imply that Taichi can see the ultraviolet, then this shows how little she understands him[xliii].

Youko: "The instant observation comes into being, he will become an occupant of that world... or so it is thought."

This simply begs the question. Thought by *who*, exactly? Her? There is nothing in MWI that suggests her conclusion.

Taichi: "Observation... into being...?"
Taichi: "No change of the world in there, or in other words, it's just a difference in the observer, then?"
Youko: "Something of that sort."
Youko: "However, many worlds observation is impossible in current theories."
Youko: "There is also no reason for us all to have transferred in unison either."
Youko: "Therefore, SF."

The conclusion is comparatively unimpeachable, it just has serious difficulties deriving from the premises. It isn't sci-fi because it's unscientific, however, it's sci-fi because it makes *no damn sense*. And that's not counting how MWI is sci-fi in and of itself.

The question remains open, however, on whether her idea of the issue being *within* the observer is actually incorrect regardless of the lack of scientific grounds for it.

Taichi: "...hmmm."
Taichi: "And with regards to the second possibility?"
Youko: "This one is the likely correct one, I think."
Youko: "In short there is no observation of another world."
Taichi: "...hmmm, so you say that SF interpretation of before is a no-go, right."
A noble face nods.
Youko: "The world, the time, the eigenhistory: all are things of continuity and sequence."
Youko: "In other words... time is not being rewound."
Taichi: "...eh?"

Time not being rewound is very interesting considering the 0.108 ratio, and the very possibility there is mathematically no time loop. She may be wrong, but is she *wrong*?

Taichi: "But that's weird. In the diaries there are descriptions from Monday up around Saturday... and from there it returns back to Monday, doesn't it?"

Take this sentence on its face: there's absolutely nothing odd with that in the slightest.

Youko: "The time loop exists in no more than appearances."
Youko: "The natural world is not repeating the same time over and over eternally."
Youko: "This end is the deterministically derived end of the world."

Youko: "Worlds are not crossing. No unusual phenomenon is occurring. All is sequential. This possibility was permitted from the beginning of the world, and we rode down that possibility to find ourselves here, exactly where we were expected to be."

Youko: "It may be seen as if an intermixing of perceptions between many worlds has occurred, however, in reality we are only advancing on a road connected by a single thread."

She believes *transfer* to be sci-fi, but not the *determinism*. But they both have the same very shaky foundation: without the *perception* of many worlds, MWI itself is nothing more than conjecture, and her concept of determinism with it.

And the question of who or what permits these possibilities on which the deterministically constructed world would be made is still in the air.

Taichi: "The loop is only appearances, you say... but in reality, we have been subjected to a reset many times over, so..."

Taichi: "For this loop phenomenon to happen in our world of origin to begin with, it would mean..."

I realized.

Of course...

Taichi: "We could never be aware of it..."

By its nature we could never notice the occurrence of a loop.

Should the unique location that is the hokora not have existed,

the phenomenon could by no means have been discovered.

This is a pretty odd statement to find in something that is supposed to be a science or sci-fi explanation: the only edifice of explicit religious significance in the entirety of the world of Cross Channel is the key to understanding the very *presence* of all this[xliv].

Taichi: "Then was this loop phenomenon preordained in this world, from the beginning? As the twilight of mankind?"

And the end of its long track,

the collapse and destruction of all land alone is not the Downfall,

but the space-time falls into disarray and ceases to progress onwards... that is its demise.

No, if space-time is still continuous, then it is simply progressing forwards in a different shape. If one is unable to *see* progress, however, it would appear still. As the ground appears still and immobile, rather than hurtling through the axis of the planet (and the Universe) at unbelievable speeds.

Taichi: "But... but say..."
Youko: "It has specific requirements... in this case, when the specified time on Sunday is reached, the world is at once dismantled... no more than this can be said."
Youko: "Following the recorded spatial information, the disassembled particles reorganize and return to the aspect of Monday."
Taichi: "But for the world it's all continuous..."
Youko: "As evidence of that, I offer that shrine."

This isn't an explanation at all: Youko is simply asserting that things are as they are, and handwaving them away. Where did that requirement come from? Where is this information recorded? And as evidence that the shrine preserves things between loops, she offers... *the shrine?*

No one ought be satisfied with this, and yet, Youko is. Youko is allegedly capable to understand that the hokora is preserved between loops despite it being empty[xlv]; and she can't, or maybe won't, think about this anymore?

Youko: "The subject of the descriptions in the notebooks is what shows the existence of a past."
Youko: "Since the past can be observed, the past exists."
Youko: "This world here permits a past."
Youko: "And then, here we are, one by one, having been dismantled many times and assembled many times."

There's a recorded past so there's a past. It's actually more of a philosophical premise than a logical conclusion, and certainly no explanation.

Youko: "...I have the feeling that we are not, strictly speaking, people anymore."
Taichi: "Well then, what are we?"
Youko: "A phenomenon."
A word too appropriate that soaked into my heart.
People no more---

This ties back to the new dialogue earlier in the route, as quoted above, but that would lead further away[xlvi]. Suffice to say at this point that if Youko believes becoming phenomenon (which *seems* to mean pairing as Alter Egos, the term is never satisfactorily explained) would allow her to surpass physics, she's very much delusional.

Taichi: "You say that it's the single thread theory, but to my ears the first one sounds more like it. We can't discern which is correct at this point in time, you know..."
Youko: "To us it is something that we see as a loop, but what it is in reality we can't investigate."
Youko: "...therefore, to start with we have no choice but to adopt one of the theories we have now."
Youko: "Presently, motion between worlds appears to be impossible, therefore it is the one without the assumption of movement, or the latter."
Taichi: "Ahhh, I see..."

We don't know, so we might start from a theory. Intelligent enough, but what does she mean they "can't" investigate? They have all the time in the Universe and a way to store information. This is ultimately more handwaving.

The next part is new to the console version:

Or do I now.
To me, the SF theory seems more fitting.
Taichi: "Suppose this is World B, would World A be left as-is?"

This expands on a theory that was sort of left on the wayside, and which is sort of important: not a script or so later, Taichi decides to send everyone

back as if he never had one single doubt that World A first of all exists and second is perfectly fine.

However, there's an oddity in this discussion that's easy to miss. If the World they're in is a Cross World, the leftovers of the intersections of two worlds, then it would be a *World C*, not a World B.

It's even perfectly labeled “C” for Cross, and the Cross-Kurosu-crossing thing is “just” a major theme and a well explained pun in the story, so there's no way this accidental. This alone makes part of this chat kind of pointless, as even assuming MWI, there's nothing there specifically that permits a World C of that sort, outside of an unsatisfying *anything that can be is*[xlvii].

Youko: "That is not a possibility I can reject, but..."
Taichi: "But?"
Youko: "What if there is some kind of phenomenic event caused by the Crossover Phenomenon?"

Ick, but that's what she says. Yes, what if a phenomenic event was caused by the phenomenical phenomenon that phenomenically phenomenates in ways that may or may not be phenomenical? It's pure handwaving.

Youko: "There is plenty to think that damage has occurred in World A as well."
Taichi: "...the disappearance of mankind, for example?"

This jumble of theories is a little more interesting: what if they are *still* in World A, but something has caused humanity to disappear?

Youko: "Perhaps, maybe."
Youko: "Some other kind of trouble has occurred, perhaps."
Youko: "Somewhere in a faraway place, a star without name may have exploded, perhaps."
Youko: "And it became something far more serious on this side, maybe... that is something no one could know."

Here we see the other major troll of the scene, after the continuous irrelevant mentions of Dirac. *A star without name that has exploded somewhere far away* may sound like a random reference, but it's nothing of the sort:

Taichi: "You are a woman of Scorpio... to be precise, I'm thinking you are an intelligent life form residing on a planet in V861 Scorpii, are you not."
Nanaka: "Ain't there a black hole there."
CCC0006B

This is a (binary) star without name, just the designation, and that was suspected of having had a black hole, which are possibly caused by the collapse of a star, itself an event comparable to an explosion. Although there's apparently no black hole there [xlviii] , the reference is difficult to interpret as anything but an indirect reference to Nanaka of a kind that is far from unique.

In other words, this should be read with Nanaka and what she represents in mind; it's particularly interesting when Taichi will ask her the same question he asks Youko here not a script later, after the seeming massacre of the Club.

Wherever you fall a pure bright hope you will never find however hard you try, then?
Taichi: "Many Worlds... then."
The Many Worlds Interpretation of quantum mechanics does not substantiate the existence of parallel universes.

The Japanese term used here, 多世界解釈, is the specific one for MWI. This is more hints that their constant calls of Dirac are wholly off base and intentionally so.

Also, even according to Wikipedia : *"MWI's main conclusion is that the universe [...] is composed of a quantum superposition of very many [...] parallel universes"* meaning that claiming MWI doesn't at least *suppose* parallel universes is silly and nonsensical.

And yet, in the letter, still not false: MWI indeed doesn't substantiate, or prove, the existence of parallel universes; as an interpretation lacking any evidence behind it, it can't substantiate anything at all.

That is a misconception; in practice it's a much more deterministic thought experiment.
In there, a World A and a World B can exist simultaneously, but it is impossible to traverse between them,
because of that very simultaneous existence.

MWI is silent on traveling, and its word would be worthless for the reasons stated. Even if Many Worlds observation experiments *have* been theorized, none have ever carried out[xlix].

Around this part, my understanding becomes a little confused.
Taichi: "I would have read Dirac if there had been a translation, but..."

This is it: this is either one of the biggest research failures of Cross Channel, or the smoking gun.

Here's an Amazon Japan link to a Japanese language edition of Dirac's book, 4th edition, published *1968* . Even 50 years later it's relatively cheap and easy to procure. The Hasekura Mansion gets one load of books a month and has a *huge* library, plus the main characters can procure just about anything: no way, no how that with the resources and the lavish there that he couldn't procure or, at the absolute very least, not know about this.

And it's far from the only Dirac book translated and published way before the early 1990s of the Hasekura Mansion period.

Now look at this conclusion:

Youko: "Even if we were to deviate from conventional theories,"
Youko: "something we believed could not happen has. That and nothing more."
Youko: "The horizon of all things physics is vast, and people are yet to lay their hands over all of it."

Youko: "And then, to us as we are right now theories are nothing but trifles."
Youko: "What is necessary is... what?"
Taichi: "I dunno."
Youko: "Someone who understands, don't we?"

She also means this as "someone who understands Taichi" – not that it changes much – but given all the above, the idea either of these characters understand what the hell they're talking about is ridiculous, at least on its face.

III.III.I A Distinct Lack of Determinism

There's one more oddity in all of this that demands description separate from the above: if the world is truly deterministic as in MWI, and the world is reset to be precisely the same at the beginning of each week, *then how do things change at all?*

The answer would be the hokora itself: it's a place that remains separate from the reset, all the way to modifying the world in that what's preserved in or around it (notebooks, Taichi/Youko, Miki): this means the reset is imperfect.

But while differences in behavior starting with the third week can be attributed *directly* to the hokora, as either Taichi or Miki make use of it and its contents, we have the second week that has no visible *direct* relationship to it, yet things still change.

Now, it's possible to just hypothesize that the particles not being reset around the hokora already change any level of determinism in the system, but that presents problems.

First, it's an hypothesis that is far too easy to exploit. It's all but a magic Get Out Of Anything Free. Now, Taichi's hallucinations *are* something of the sort, but as we're going see, they are guided by very specific rules *and* they are a trump card that's avoidable in the great majority of cases.

Taichi's hallucinations have rules and limits of application; the hokora having this sort of resonance effect does not.

Second and biggest problem: it's just moving things around. *Why* does the hokora do this? Why is time continuous there and not outside? That's the question, and here there's no answer.

In fact, even discarding the entirety of the loop as Taichi's hallucination doesn't solve this problem entirely precisely because it still doesn't explain why Taichi would construct an hallucination that has the hokora as the one exception.

All these unanswered questions, apparent contradictions and seemingly overpowered joker cards, all of which with no answer as of yet, are at this moment only a painful reminder that however complex things may look at this point, *we are still dealing with a severe simplification of things*.

And things are about to get a good deal more complex.

III.III.II Many-Worlds Conclusions

This discussion contains three major oddities that smack of intentionality:

- the continuous and explicitly irrelevant references to Paul Dirac in a discussion about MWI;
- an odd side-reference to Taichi's mother;
- the negation of the existence of a book that they should've had easy access to.

Even assuming the latter is some epic research failure, the first one alone is strong evidence of intentional irrelevance of the apparent conclusions of this explanation, and in ways clearly intended to string along the superficial and less careful.

From a more rigorous standpoint, Youko is conflating MWI with Copenhagen, insisting on *sight* and *observation* as determining factors for the entering of parallel worlds without any shred of scientific ground to do so.

Practically the only thing implied in there that's not nearly completely nonsensical is how MWI doesn't substantiate parallel universes, and that seems more like a slip of the tongue than anything. Literal and lateral hints suggest MWI should not be taken as a serious explanation of the story.

III.IV No Science Here, Just Fiction

Understandable if looking at the very character "X".
Two lines. Their respective flows continuing.
The crossing is an instant. Yet the flows don't stop.
Did I ride a third flow here?
CCX0001

If the worlds ／ and \ are crossing, and Taichi rode a third flow ｜ to the Cross World, then the end result of this would not be an **X**, but an asterisk ＊.

Taichi: "Nothing! That is to say, he didn't seem to be in the spirit to invade my full-width asterisk."

[* Full-width asterisk = 『＊』 ← this]
CCC4009

There's not much to add to the author himself strongly hinting that this Worlds Crossing explanation is *literally full of shit*, except that once again Sakuraba is used to point it out.

With his *dick*.

Semi-jokes aside, the point of this chapter, I remind, wasn't to illustrate how little sense the science of Cross Channel makes; that *alone* would make the VN simply poorly researched. The point has been to illustrate the many subtle and less-subtle ways in which author Romeo Tanaka points out that these explanations are not *meant* to make sense.

These explanations are meant to take in those who only take in the superficial breadth of the discussion, who are impressed by the big words, but are either not intelligent or actually cultured enough to actually

recognize that what they're reading makes no sense and has the actual intellectual depth of a puddle, while any meaning it may have is hidden in places most people aren't even going to think of looking[1].

Let's take one last example, the explanation of Nanaka's Zubaaan:

This girl is capable of generating Comic Force Fields.
* Comic Force Field = Science-Taichinism.
A hyperscientific theory on par with Scalar Electromagnetics and Ether Cosmology, or devices such as the Meteoric Ascent Engine. An acceleration and simultaneous mitigation of all physical phenomena.
Result: the generation of a comic book-like effect unimaginable by the normal laws of physics. Statistically often associated with unyielding childhood friend-like personalities, it exists for the purpose of preserving the nature of the character.
CCA0023

Setting aside the characterization aspects, which will return later, it's interesting how this explanation is *literally* ascientific in every way: Scalar Electromagnetics, Ether Cosmology and the Meteoric Ascent Engine are complete loads; there's nothing there that even remotely makes sense, scientifically speaking.

Compare the Bullet Train Sneeze, which is a popular belief, and the white hair granting resistance to insolation, which is an interesting reasoning (white rejects light, so white hair should help) that happens to be factually incorrect.

But this begins to build a thematic contrast between her and Youko; while Youko talks out of her behind about scientific-sounding nonsense, Nanaka performs de-facto miracles to which Taichi attaches an obviously unscientific but scientific-*sounding* explanation.

Taichi: "Because of your scientific powers, even getting struck that hard means I can still live!"
CCA0023

This is actually proven within the story to be incorrect, not just because the Zubaaan is just his memory of his birth, but because Nanaka does not exist at all. But things are nowhere near that simple, and this is where we start taking a turn for the really strange. Nanaka's just the beginning of it.

Let's consider the hokora. It's the only construction of religious significance in the story, yet the only place exempt from the loop. Nanaka points to it from the very beginning, talking about the god that resides in there. Even Youko, if incoherently, in the end claims that what is *permitted*, ergo physics in toto, are not constructed by the mere interaction of mankind but exist outside, at the command of an unspecified god, which she wants to surpass in unclear and contradictory ways.

But the hokora appears to shed no immediate light on the remaining question here, which is *why* would Tanaka write all this if the answer is not in the obvious? Assuming he didn't royally screw up, this lie would need to shed light on something, but *what?*

Let's approach this from another point of view.

Rather than Taichi seeing a phenomenon and looking for a scientific explanation, Taichi is using pseudo-scientific explanations as *inspiration* . The rationalization would then simply come *before* the behavior. The reality of science of MWI is not involved in the slightest, Taichi's madness is simply *like* MWI.

The reason he makes this MWI explanation is because he's rationalizing his madness to its inspiration. The error is triple-compound. As for why Youko plays along, there's a simple answer to that, but for the time being let's assume Taichi isn't asking why the world has become like this, but why *he* has become like this, and the speculation is on that subject alone.

The hints throughout all three major trolls have been consistent with regards to the “cause”, actually: *an observation error* . Something is wrong with Taichi's eyes; something in them allows him to switch worlds; something in their construction permits him to perceive something different, a different world.

Read backwards, that simply means the world doesn't change, only the observer's perception of it does. Taichi's eyes don't cause outside changes, but simply allow *interior* changes. In other words, this is a literal observation error, in the sense that the observer (Taichi) is hallucinating.

IV Observer Error: An MWI Approach to Chuuni and Denpa

In Gunjou, there are people who live entirely into their world,
as well as people who easily hurt others.
CCC3001

Taichi: "In any one class, an average of ten people are wibble-wibbling radio waves, or Denpa..."
CCD1001

Even madness, in Japan, has its own subcategories, compartmentalized and used as characterization devices. Denpa is mentioned by name in Cross Channel, as seen above, and is in a sense interwoven in the story: what are the characters trying to do but to build an antenna and spread radio waves (said *denpa*) into the world?

Denpa has come to indicate people and character archetypes with a bizarre and specific kind of madness, characterized by incomprehensible behavior, perhaps a similarity with the tinfoil hatter and the conspiracy theorist of Western cliché. The idea of people being perfectly normal to a point, and then suddenly going mad in a way that looks organized (and perhaps only is to the protagonist, who may well be the only one going mad), is a hallmark of the genre called itself Denpa.

But the more relevant definition is about entertaining fantasies about a different world, and in this sense, the Denpa person is closer to an archetype that's come into popularity in the West fairly recently as of writing: *chuunibyou* , shortened chuuni, literally "second year of middle school syndrome".

Chuunibyou is... colorfully described here , but simply watching one of the most famous Chuuni anime [li] would be sufficient; as it's far beside the point of this monograph to decide where Denpa ends and Chuunibyou begins, or even if there's a point in strictly distinguish the two, there's little point in further examining the distinction [lii] .

The reason I bring it up is that the theory may not seem as compatible with Denpa as it is with Chuuni, as Chuuni wasn't really that spread back in 2003, if it was at all, even if the behavior isn't exactly uncommon to mankind. What's the desire of diving into a different world but one of the reasons to read and watch movies?

But it's interesting to bring up Chuuni for the term it uses for the rules of the Chuuni sufferer's world: S *ettei* , literally *setting* . This is a good working concept for the study of Taichi's madness.

Taichi has a S *ettei* , but that setting is not fixed; Taichi's will be particularly flexible. What we are looking for in this chapter will be:

1. Examples of these changes;
2. Physical or psychological motives for these changes;
3. Rules and limits for these changes.

We've already had a suggestion for 3), that Taichi's madness works via something similar to the Many Worlds Interpretation, and its associated determinism, so that's a good place to start. I've exemplified that MWI-inspired concept as followed:

I have choice A and B.
Choice A leads to choices 1 and 2, choice B to choices 3 and 4.
I choose B, and choices 1 and 2 are forever lost; but somehow I re-entangle with choice 2, and *the past will change* in order to make the choice taken at the first step to be A, even if my memory is not of that.

The past changes: there's the key. This is only conjecture in reality, but in the fictional setting constructed by a single person this would be fairly simple to do: when something *recurring* happens that has a certain

explanation, leave the event and its recursion, but let the *explanation* expire until it becomes a variable.

Or more specifically, erase the original explanation, and replace it with something more compatible with the internal world's Setting. Although in manners as obtuse as most anything, the Deus Ex Chaos scene actually explains this better:

Miki: "You are someone who has the possibility of becoming any kind of Protagonist with a Memory Loss Attribute via Quantum Theory, Senpai."
Miki: "By the way, in this situation, the specifics of the past are refined on the instant of recall. 'Course there's no change in total mass of possibilities originally permitted even including that past. In short, in eroge, everybody's an older brother with a younger sister."
CCZDXC

The past is not so much ***de***fined as ***re***fined,, on the instant of recall, within scientific-sounding limits that end up as being the need for some measure of consistency within the world. This would work better if the memory of the past choice were to be erased, and this brief scene actually showcases this process in a very interesting manner.

This piece of apparently irrelevant exposition (imagine reading this *before* the end of the first week, which is where it originally appeared!) comes right after Taichi becomes less than nice to Miki, which results in her smacking him about, giving him memory loss[liii].

In other words, Taichi's memory will more than allows this change. The records of the story, however, aren't so kind and allow seeing the process in action.

And so we back to the concept of *memory loss*, as technically Taichi is forgetting all that has happened between the routes all by himself and with no external help; day and week being tied via mathematical formula already hinted there's no time loop, and we're just beginning to warm up on the subject.

This refinement very much fits with ideas seen in the chapter about the Worlds of Cross Channel: the lack of people and contact in emotionally and physically deserted settings is *refined* into the complete absence of all mankind but the people close to Taichi; the soulless repetitiveness of it all is *refined* in a time loop.

But refinement is a process that implies a progression, and in this, the first week comes as a hint of a very different sort: nothing special happens, the rest of the people are away/irrelevant, his flashbacks are in color because he dreams in color (the telltale sign are the cicadas[liv] anyway), the events are largely fixed already because their life is one of turgid routine.

In other words, there's no strange event in that first week. The problem begins afterwards: he *refines* much of it in the world of his mind, down to irrelevant details, for example, the lack of other people seen becomes the physical absence of all humans.

This is far from the first or the greatest of these refinements: Taichi's eyes went from a luckily benign malformation and an odd predisposition towards night vision into Mystic Eyes of Alternate World Sight As Well As Night Vision And Probably More; his hair went from having lost its pigmentation due to horror to having always been like that (or is it viceversa?).

IV.I Refinement, Plot Hole and Memory Loss

To find evidence of *refinement* there needs to be an obvious change in the story, something that was A in the beginning, but is B later. Things don't grow simpler by focusing on a single aspect, as there's many other things running interference: the possibility of plot hole and Taichi's memory issues themselves.

So there has to be something that is unambiguously intentional and still is *not* him simply forgetting something and recalling it later: the change needs to be there to stay.

We'll see four examples: one that is definitely just his memory, one that is intentional but not a change in Settei, an example definite enough that it may be the intended reading key for all this, and one that is just bizarre.

IV.I.I Memory Loss or Plot Hole: Pillaging the Flowers

We've seen plenty with regards to Taichi's unreliable memory, the whole thing with Yutaka for starters, but also the thing about his hair color. For this example there's no need to move far from the hair, as one of the hints for that was in the Kiri Chase scene in the Miki route, where this is also found:

The Double Pillage of the Flowers' First Kiss---
CCC0011C

...which contradicts a very important scene seen earlier, in Kiri's route:

Her lips are stolen.
CCC3008

This is the flashback on the rooftop to a year before. This scene is *very* important, as it's the kiss what truly puts a wedge between Kiri and Taichi[lv]. The Sendback route script for this flashback has been rewritten, and it puts even more emphasis on it:

Kiri, stirring, I hug with strength as I pillage the space inside of her mouth.
CCD3003

The word for 'pillage' is one that appears three whole times in the story with this rewrite, and the first two are here[lvi].

Taichi's memory being faulty? Plot hole? Hard to tell, but this isn't the kind of change we're looking for.

IV.I.II Just a Joke: The MateBook's Origins

Miki and Taichi have a ritual: that of him putting signatures on Miki's ID booklet[lvii]. The ritual itself seems to have little purpose, but there's a running gag subtle enough that it's easy to miss, that becomes no gag at all seen through this chapter: the origins and specific workings of the MateBook change pretty much at every mention.

It starts as a public bathhouse in the main City:

So it is called at this school, this ID booklet with a second role.
Yes.
No dignitary of this school would be unaware of the existence of MateBook, the high-class bathhouse #1 in popularity located in the popular spot behind the main City's train station.
CCA0008

And it stays mostly similar the next week:

So is called this intra-school ID booklet with a second role, named after the high-class bathhouse #1 in popularity located in the popular spot behind the main City's train station, MateBook.
CCB0007

And then it gets odd:

The book taking its name from the famous Soapland "Matebook" in which the first-generation school Headmaster achieved enlightenment via excessive pleasure is nothing but a lie.
CCC0016

And then, uhm...

Taichi: "Tell me one last thing then. Are you not the student identification of a female hi-school student and a high female school student that's a high school student, aren't you?"
Miki: "Precisely so!"
CCC4015

The goal itself is fluid. It starts with this accumulation of Princess Stamps:

A notebook is given on gaining membership, and for every use a Princess Stamp is received.
The accumulation of stamps is the measure of how cheaply one can enjoy services such as the Double or the Triple.

...what's even a triple now.
What kind of world would be that?
Would it be Shangri-la?
And is the sun yellow?
CCA0008

Considering it's the intraschool ID booklet, the idea that the booklet is given on becoming member is ironic; the Princess Stamp is nonsensical until considering Taichi's name in the mansion:

Ichiko. One-princess.
CCC3025

The goal then changes:

Taichi: "Collect 20 of them and you'll have an amazing service!"
Miki: "...it's totally a sexual prank!"
CCC0016A

As for how much of a joke it is, well...

Taichi: "Double date!"
Miki: "Eh, in what combination?"
Taichi: "Ahhh, me, and Miki, and Kiri-chin."
Miki: "Isn't that a double only in women?"
CCC4007

...Unreset Miki certainly must've gained enough Princess Stamps.

So the identity and the goal of the MateBook changes, but the changes are largely compatible with each other (brothel), the joke is pretty much stated, and while the payoff is extraordinarily subtle, it is present. This is a change, but not of the kind we're looking for.

IV.I.III Settei Change: The Amount of Bread in the Cafeteria

There's very little left in the cafeteria when Taichi visits it in the second week (the first week had a flashback; cases of the curry bread everyone but Sakuraba hates, a single box of croquette bread, and Sakuraba himself, gnawing on ~~human flesh in what reads suspiciously like a recreation of the first zombie encounter in the original Resident Evil~~ [lviii] said curry bread.

The explanation is given on that visit:

Taichi: "...is there any other type of bread?"
Sakuraba: "Was."
Taichi: "Past tense, huh."
All eaten then?
Sakuraba: "Don't need anything but curry bread, tossed the rest."
CCB2010

The explanation is also given on the third week:

Taichi: "...when did they bring these in?"
Sakuraba: "Yesterday didn't they?"
Yesterday.
Certainly today's a half-day but bread's still on sale.
Fundamentally, holidays excluded, this cafeteria is always in operation.
There was the opening ceremony, yet still bread was brought in.
Indeed.
Therefore, until yesterday, the world was being properly maintained.
Taichi: "Still, the number seems insufficient."
The number of cases seems not one-tenth of the normal.
Sakuraba: "Because the opening ceremony day is half vacation perhaps."
Taichi: "Still... insufficient."
CCC0020

...and the explanation is an important part of the fourth week:

Still, I don't want the curry bread.
I divided my own share into so many parts and carried it to my house.
I carried the curry bread cases to the school cafeteria, and left them there.
If anyone has survived, they'll probably eat it.

This contradiction is pretty big, unexplained, *and* too large to be reducible to a plot hole. Sakuraba has no reason to lie; there's no reason for this story to change; and even if the Sakakibara diary is very much questionable in authenticity, there's little reason to doubt that those words *are* written in it.

What we are seeing here is the *progress of the explained into the mysterious*. The explanation given here is first removed and made into a mystery, then solved via an alternative solution that supports, on first look, the idea of a world far more mysterious and inexplicable than it actually is.

This is well visible reading Sakuraba's second explanation closely: all Taichi's asked is about the number of cases that seem insufficient. Sakuraba simply took it to mean *the cases of curry bread*. Taichi may have read the diaries at the point of this scene, but evidently Sakuraba's explanation of the week "prior" didn't fit in: he doesn't look for the croquette bread at all.

As for the Sakakibara diary, well, it's been shown highly unreliable so here's more fuel for that fire. For what we know at this point, it may as well have been written by Taichi (or in response to him) *after* the explanation changes.

There is one lingering issue here: even if the Settei has changed, Taichi forgetting what the explanation was remains a *prerequisite* . This is why I believe this to be the reading key, because finding examples that are even this straightforwards is incredibly difficult.

To examine this all will require approaching that, as the pseudo-MWI remains reliant on that concept. For now, take note of the characters involved: Sakuraba and Miki. Their meta-roles are just beginning.

However, before moving to the next example, there is one interesting exercise to make: with this Pseudo-MWI Chuuni, the concept of forgetting and remaking explanations that is, as well as a bit of character study, it's fairly simple to construct a plausible explanation for the rest of the events

(the existence of only a few cases of bread) that doesn't require the disappearance of mankind.

But not the time loop: in fact, the cafeteria looks deserted *because* of the "time loop" making the day into a week, as Taichi never comes there at peak hour [lix] . Lie that tells truth, once more.

Sakuraba is a rich moron, and since he just loves that curry bread, he would buy all the leftovers. Leftovers which exist because the cafeteria is unfettered by demand, meaning the bread will come in and remain there regardless of whether it sells – and it wouldn't, because Sakuraba is the only one who likes it.

Gunjou will be Gunjou, in other words, so they'd not only have the bread left over but also allow Sakuraba's purchase along with him being in the cafeteria out of hours, eating. Wouldn't want him to snap or something, right? Oh, he's not worried about test scores:

Sakuraba: "Been eating curry bread for four periods."
Taichi: "You dumbass."
Sakuraba: "I expect to earn a considerable amount of school credit."
Taichi: "Uhm, we're not on a credit system."
Sakuraba: "Tiny detail. I don't care."
CCC0031C

And this event happens so often that it may well be a fixed eventuality as predictable as the break of dawn.

This is where it'd get complex: the croquette bread. Sakuraba says he tosses the rest, so maybe he's just been careless; he just has to forget it *once* for the possibility to become fixed. Any more croquette may be simply claimed to exist by Taichi without it actually being there, or bought by him at the cafeteria, and then assumed to just be there.

This behavior sounds absurd at this point, but it'll be far from strange for him as we'll see. Remember for now that he *is* living a single day as if it were an entire week, and that delusion is all but unbreakable for him.

Since the situation at Gunjou is generally stable as far as the people there, there may simply be a box of croquette bread always left over, just as with the curry bread.

Now, Sakuraba will eat a lot of the curry bread, but far from all, as he later gets sick [lx] of it, meaning plenty of this curry is likely to be left over for any visitors later in the day - such as Tomoki, who's seen in the Misato Sendback route, and who doesn't know of the croquette bread.

It's not simple and clean, but look at how simple it is to construct an explanation that is coherent with the setting, the characters, and with the concept here introduced of *degradation of explanation* , beyond even the blatant one across scripts.

When constructing explanations of this sort, the dreaded Epileptic Trees are always behind the corner; however, I believe this all shows the strength of the writing of Cross Channel, as well as further show the intentionality of this construction.

IV.I.IV Just Plain Odd: The Mystery at Touko's Mansion

There's another relatively minor mystery that's compatible with this idea of *changing explanation*, and one that still serves as a further introduction to Taichi's unstable and pseudo-deterministic Chuuni world. Something odd and incomprehensible takes place when Taichi goes to the Kirihara mansion to find Touko dead on her bed:

Touko's house is huge.
So enormously huge that it intercepts the sunlight, and I can't see anything besides silhouetted darkness.
I have sharp night eyes, but for some reason I absolutely can't see.
In the present, where humanity has vanished, an inexplicable phenomenon of this level isn't worth paying attention to.
I go inside.
Naturally, there is a suit of armor inside.
...or so I sort of guess, because it's pitch-black darkness due to the windows being firmly shut.

With things like this, no matter how sharp my night vision, I can't be certain of what I see.
CCC3021

And later on...

Touko's house.
No... mansion.
I go inside, and it was nothing but darkness.
The windows are shut tightly.
I take out the flashlight, and head to Touko's room.
CCC4015

The description is similar, but subtly different. In the first scene, he can't see - to the point where he sounds like he's stumbling in the absolute darkness. Not only that, but he can't see *the outside of the mansion*. That is really bizarre.

And yet, in that scene:

The mansion's luxurious runner carpets completely absorb my voice.
CCC3021

How does he see them?

The absolute simplest explanation of this is meta-joke: it's all pitch black because there's no interior background; but while there's plenty of things in the story that lend themselves to this reading[lxi], it's uncommon for things to *stop* at the meta-joke.

Meta-joke doesn't explain this odd change, either:

I wander through the residence.
It was like a maze.
Where could Touko's room even be.
Second floor maybe?
I climb the staircase.

This is the kind of a mansion where you'd just see some zombies popping out, isn't it.
Taichi: "TOUKOOO!"
No response.
The mansion's luxurious runner carpets completely absorb my voice.
I go check the rooms one by one.
What a pain.
...it'd have been better if I had come with Youko-chan.
CCC3021

Vs.:

I have come here several times in the past.
I almost ended up being introduced to her father.
...but I ran away.
Second floor.
I go check the rooms one by one.
I'm sure, it was around here...
CCC4015

The contradiction could hardly be more obvious: in the earlier script, belonging to the Kiri route, he stumbles around blind in a mansion too dark for him to see; in the second, in the Miki route, he's experienced with it, brings a flashlight, and beelines straight for the correct room.

This odd change in experience will return later, when Touko will confirm that she tried to make him visit her parents but he ran away, meaning he plausibly has knowledge of the mansion. If so, why did he forget it?

There's much more that's odd her how come Touko, who can barely lift herself up after the third day of starving herself can still manage to shut down her huge mansion *so perfectly* in so short a time? And why, if there's supposedly no one?

Even if meta-joke can explain some of it, the oddities here pile up. And then, there's kind of the big question: if there's no loop, and it's all in

Taichi's mind, *does Touko die*? Actually, there's an even tougher question: if time is looping, why doesn't she *always* die?

These and more will have to wait.

IV.I.V Intentional or Plot Hole?

Before moving on, it's best to give more space to the question of intentionality that will have arisen in looking at these examples.

It's impossible to examine the concept of *refined explanations* without at least comparing it to the simpler concept of plot hole. As the writing of a text progresses, and the world further refined, inevitably errors pop up in what's been written previously.

And this is where the clever way in which Cross Channel is written begins to shine: indeed, that's the case, the two things are similar. We've already seen something that could be a plot hole, that of Taichi forgetting he had *already* stolen Kiri's first kiss; all that lies around it, however, screams intentionality.

The suspicion begins on the *why* would Tanaka do so, and that's harder to tell. The casual mention of the hair here gives a good hint, but was it always intentional, or was the joke too good to pass up and was it just dressed up like intentionality, or was it always an error and the dress-up happened once it was noticed? That's impossible to say.

Because of the way plot holes are made and the way Taichi builds his world are similar, plot holes are easy to reintegrate as part of the world-building. Of course, Tanaka is smart enough to leave *reading keys* as well as clues to *intentionality*, otherwise it'd be impossible to tell there was a world-building going on at all; but you can't blame an author for making good use of what is essentially world-building platinum.

Remember that it'd be easy for the plot holes remaining to make *no* sense regardless, as the *similarity* between plot hole and faulty memory/world refining does not make *identity*; I've already pointed out that it makes zero sense for Gunjou to have mandatory attendance for people failing the test

and demand tuition fees, especially since no penalty for not paying up is ever established.

That one I can't justify as anything but plot hole, but it is a fairly minor problem as Misato's father would simply be monetarily constrained in more than that after the divorce.

But make no mistake that this similarity is intentional, and in fact, plays *itself* a part of the deepest themes. What is Taichi doing with his Settei, after all, but telling a story himself? And with that question, the realization that figuring out the way his Settei is built will answer nothing more than the How of his story, not just Tanaka's, leaving the What and the Why far from being explored.

IV.II Taichi's Settei – Memories and Memory Edits

Now that we've seen examples of how the Settei changes (and doesn't), as well as just plain oddities in the story that at least appear examinable with more understanding of how Taichi constructs his world, it's time to delve into the depth.

The line of approach remains that of *memories*: even the one explanation that is definitely a change in this sense was still ultimately reliant on Taichi forgetting what the original explanation was in the first place.

There's a need to analyze Taichi himself, as well as everything about memories: *how* he remembers, *when* he remembers, and even *whether* he remembers or not. The way Taichi *acts* is strictly connected to the way he *remembers*, as they both have the same source: a combination of traumatic events in the past and his own personal physical characteristics.

There's little in Taichi's Settei that's random, and plenty that is actually the believable behavior of someone obviously psychologically damaged. For a story that so far has rejected science as a direct explanation, it's interesting to notice there is plenty of realism when it comes to the *human* factor.

First of all, a quick look at Taichi's past, to remind of who it is we're looking at and to see if there's anything obvious that can help in this

examination.

Taichi's past is one of alienation from his own self. He was taken away from his dead parents, brought into a mansion out in nowhere, made to work both as a servant and as a tea companion. His gender and his name were taken away in these parties, and he was made to keep shallow company with shallow adults by speaking words that were not his.

There is where he learned to talk big and shallow as well as force himself to smile, so as to cover up for his real self.

As past-time, he chased after an elusive phantom, Youko, in the library; there he reads books he doesn't understand, providing him the vast library of half-knowledge that he draws upon to construct those vaguely plausible largely ignorant discourses of his.

At a point, a sudden shift in his boring but certain life brings in violent, sexually depraved people. He's forced again to be a girl, and with the help of Youko, constructs a plan: in a single night, 14 people are slaughtered. Or that's his word, but whether this is credible is yet to be seen; according to it, the moment he watched Youko – who didn't kill anyone in that night – he went insane: in her eyes was clear rejection for the boy who had turned murderer for what ends up being her sake.

This Taichi, broken, was then reshaped by Youko; the question, never truly answered, is *how*.

There is one conspicuous oddity between Taichi of the present time and that Taichi of the past: present Taichi is a veteran videogame player, especially knowledgeable of RPGs[lxii], although no videogames are ever mentioned in his time at the Mansion.

RPG characteristics are interesting to examine when it comes to Taichi and this setting. For example, let's take two of the most famous Japanese RPGs: Final Fantasy VII and VIII. In the former, we have spiky/strangely colored hair, a thirst for heroics, and most importantly, *delusional memory loss*; in

the latter, a rivalry mixed with gruff unapproachability melted by the love of a woman.

And then, of course, the one RPG mentioned by all but name, *Phantasy Star II*, and the concepts stated in-story of death, rebirth, and memory loss in between[lxiii].

All of these things Taichi has or strives for, more or less obviously or intentionally. What's a good protagonist without weird hair and memory loss, after all? And hence the connection: when it comes to the Settei, there's a need to look at this in the aspect of *videogames*. Nice and meta.

IV.II.I How Taichi Remembers

When it comes to the specific of the mechanics of Taichi's memories, it's necessary to go back at something actually already seen in the first chapter: the distinction between *memory* and *recall*.

When Taichi claims he can't remember Nanaka:

Taichi: "You are---"
Nanaka: "Nanaka."
Taichi: "Nanaka..."
No understanding.
On absolutely no axis of the past is that name recorded.
CCA0023

...what he means is *recall*, and specifically, *conscious* recall – as subconscious recall was very well evidenced when it comes to Yutaka, even more so than with Nanaka.

There's no doubt he *can* recall, and the recall itself is of high quality. In some lines, added for the console version, Taichi describes his recall like this:

Suppose I were to be able to gain a something blessed by happiness,
I would've been able to commit it to memory for all life, as a vision.
For I have a memory that movie-like. I do.

CCC0002

That's why we see flashbacks in the story: those are his moments of recall. This makes his recalling fairly unconventional right then and there, even without considering the making of his mother into a ghost, his birth into Zubaaan or the whole Kounosu/Tanizaki thing.

In that, even when we see him recalling, the *what* remains highly suspicious. What we see may not be what literally happens, or it may be allegorical, metaphorical, or otherwise referential to the reality.

This leads into the problem of *when* he recalls. The first keyword is *paramnesia*:

Kiri was there,
taking in the view of the outside world from the fence.
Paramnesia kidnapped my awareness to the distant past.
CCC3008

This is right before he remembers force-kissing Kiri on the rooftop, which is a fairly lengthy flashback. Now, sometimes his flashbacks are just dreams[lxiv], but even those tend to be appropriate to the route in many ways; as most flashbacks aren't dreams, what may look like simple narrative convenience instead fits into this concept of paramnesia.

Another interesting example is in Another Story, right before he begins to repeat the first "day" as far as lines go, to no one understanding him:

I head to the school.
Ah, this scene setting... it gives me paramnesia.
Right, that scene where I go to school with my Imouto-in-law.
CCZAS

The second is one recurring in the storyline: *automatism*.

As my body automates, one of my recollections rises to the surface.

The stage and setting being the rooftop, the heart patterns it to the distant past, trying to recreate the impetus one more time.
CCD1001

Interesting that he claims being capable of acting in the world still at some level *while* remembering; definitely to keep in mind.

It's already possible to draw a first conclusion: Taichi's recollections are trigger-based (paramnesia) and not necessarily voluntary (automatism).

Things turn interesting when this is combined with something that makes him forget. We have a scene, early in the story, that shows Taichi first forgetting, then remembering.

Right when Taichi first returns to the rooftop on evening, Misato says something quite unwise:

Misato: "No, that is not... but certainly when we first met you did give me a sort of scare."
CCB0010

This causes Taichi to go 'weird', in videogame-like ways:

Misato: "Wah, wah, Peke-kun has become an hackneyed Creator of All Life like some boss from a 20-year old videogame?!"
CCB0010

There it is, the videogame thing returning! Not RPGs or VNs here, but old arcade games[lxv].

A traumatic trigger caused him to forget; but is the problem with his looks based on anything but memories? His feminine figure and eye pattern got him made into a doll, twice, and his white hair is the purported evidence of him being a murderer.

He is then returned with a simple mechanical fixing (punch), wherein he has suddenly forgotten:

Taichi: "I was told something so shocking that I had a dream where I was using the Humanity Annihilation Starbuster Bomb in retaliation... but I cannot remember what was so shocking that motivated me."
CCB0010

And then:

Taichi: "Peke-kun, you worry too much about appearances. Humanity is in the heart!"
Taichi: "Appearances...?"
Ah, right.
CCB0010

There we are, *trigger* and remembering:

Misato: 『Certainly when we first met you[r indescribable ugliness] did give me a sort of scare.』
CCB0010

...or does he? That sentence is blatantly edited to make it look harsher on Misato, harsher in ways that would also be harsher on himself. It's far from an odd thing to do, however, to mishear what someone said in convenient ways is typical of humans – whether the convenience would make the mishearing in positive or in negative.

So in this scene we had trigger → *bad* memories → system crash → forgetting → trigger → *edited* remembering of first trigger.

And we've also seen how this scene concludes: with him diving into Misato's boobs, in a scene that's sufficiently ambiguous to support the idea that the *rubbing* is fake, and the *tears* real.

Multiple triggers, multiple memories, even a severely adverse reaction to some of them; and then, this odd *editing* of memories, which is certainly another thing to investigate.

We can look at the madness in the middle for even more examples of editing, in fact. Taichi becomes some kind of videogame stereotype of a god, and is about to destroy humanity with a bomb of some kind because they won't play nice to him.

The most common if reductionist explanation of all this is that he used his Eyes to enter the Parallel World, together with everyone else. Now, the parallel is actually off, as the bomb would have *eliminated* everyone, not move him (and perhaps others) to a place where no one else is.

Now consider the theory through which we're seeing all of this, that what he did is *use his eyes* to “eliminate” everyone, i.e. that this is all an observer error and what he's doing is pretending (more or less automatically) not to see anyone. This elimination was actually something hypothesized by Youko in that big talk of hers!

Beginning to see how the literal, the lateral, the hallucination, the videogaming, the meta-references (Nasu's Mystic Eyes), the real and the virtual, the true and the false all come together into this?

But let's not rush ahead, there's much to see yet.

From this scene, it can be deduced that Taichi can lose control and completely lose himself in response to things that remind him of bad events, such as comments on his looks; when he comes out of this Weird State, he gives the *appearance* of having forgot.

Compare this to Youko thinking that the shock Taichi got after he killed the Shinkawas would've erased all his memories. But all he forgets in this scene here is what exactly *triggered* that breakdown event, not the event himself[lxvi].

In fact, even when he's reminded of it, what he remembers is an overly dramatized version of the trigger, constructed via memory editing.

In conclusion.

First, Taichi's memory functions on stimulus-response: a *trigger*, an anchor, something of the present that reminds him of the past (but is not necessarily identical!) would make him remember.
Second, he is not quite in control of this trigger.
Third, he seems capable of functioning at least partially *automatically* while having these flashbacks.
Fourth and final, what he remembers may not even be real. Not even his memories of the trigger.

IV.II.III A Propensity to Auditory and Visual Hallucinations

Misato: "Peke-kun, you seem to have a talent for inventing things."
CCD0014B

Taichi: "Somehow... feels like I'd floated in to a damn shallow faux-contemplative world."
Mizato[lxvii]: "Heh heh heh, that is your normal everyday self, is it not?"
CCZDXC

The question of *what* Taichi remembers is twofold. On one hand, *are his memories wrong?* On the other, *are his memories correct, but what is being recorded in them that is wrong?*

This is important as Taichi, as the chapter heading says, has a tendency to have audio and visual hallucinations. This doesn't take long to demonstrate, it's enough to think of Nanaka; she's what appears to be a living and breathing character, though Taichi's interactions with her are at times suspiciously patterned, as well:

Nanaka: "Sorry, I mistook you, 's all."
Taichi: "For what?"
Nanaka scratched her head.
Nanaka: "A different one."
CCC0045A

In this scene, and a nearly-identical one in the Miki route, Nanaka keeps repeating the pattern first seen near the end of the first week, ignoring all that he says until around this point.

Interesting to compare to the change between “first” and “second” days of Another Story, but rather beside the point here. Now Nanaka is little more than a memory; therefore, Taichi's "dialogues" with her have to be little more than memory replays.

Most of them would have been originally monologues, where Nanaka played then-infant Taichi's part, as well, meaning that *his* responses were also memories, and memories put there by someone else. This raises all sorts of questions already (why does a memory point at the hokora?), but Nanaka is just the beginning. There's a wealth more:

A videogame-like Imaginary special effect danced in my mind.
CCA0002

Watch these Imaginary things. There's plenty of them!

She flexes an Imaginary bicep.
CCA0008

She reads out an Imaginary letter.
CCA0016

I smoked an Imaginary cigarette.
CCB008B

The first one looks sufficiently reading key-like: it happens *right* after he's been hit by Touko, and once more there's a reference to videogames.

And speaking of stuff that happens right after Touko smacks him about:

Old Karadeka: "Majority of human body made of fluid. In other words, you a water balloon, man."
Old Karadeka: "Strike was with flexible yet strong palm, came from bottom, worked way up, diagonal. Opponent intra-skull fluids move with sympathy, give vibration to brain greater than that of normal fist strike!"
* Read in P*t Mo**ta's voice[lxviii]

CCA0026

These two are particularly interesting in that they come right after Touko smacks Taichi about. However:

Masamune:『In those occasions when Touko's anger achieves its peak, the Demonic Harakiri Blade crosses 4.35 light years of space and time in a Spatial Bisecting Leap that it can accomplish in a mere 0.05"!』

CCB2015

...this is not. In fact, Touko's apparently comedic ability to summon her sword from beyond space-time, as well as to perfectly slice a video camera in half *despite not having training at all*[lxix] should be entirely suspicious at this point.

There's his conversation with his belly bug, which ends like this:

And with the presence of this two-way communication with an existence most assuredly conceptual, there lies the measure of how much of a human I am.
Is that what they generally call lu**cy perhaps indeed that is so.

CCB2002

He calls it delusional. Also called delusional:

I send a signal with the eyes to『Great Motor Reflexes * Sakura Kiri』.
*[**25** sentence fragments within parenthesis ensue]*
And that was sort of how our talk unfolded.
Or maybe that was how my delusion did.

CCA0027

Not the first time, either:

Crackle, crackle an electric eye-sign is sent.
Shinkawa: "!"
Yutaka notices.

Yes, help me please!
I speak with eloquence via eyes.
CCC3004

How about some audible onomatopoeia:

Nuditehhh!
That's the onomatopoeia that was audible from someplace.
CCB2007

Outspokehhh!
That's the onomatopoeia that was audible.
CCC3002

Or just flat-out scientific trolling:

This catching of a whisper in the midst of a squall in truth is nothing more than the Cocktail Party Effect, but still I lose myself in dreaming that some special peculiarity exists between me and Senpai.
CCB0005

Interesting how the Cocktail Party Effect is all but *explicitly* said to be nothing but Taichi adding his usual veneer of scientific credibility to what he really does: hallucinate a dialogue.

These are just random examples, many of which kind of obvious in their unreality; but the question remains whether these are just little gags rather than something to be taken as part of Taichi's issues.

It's time to look at something a little more concrete.

IV.II.III.I The Reading Key: The Misato Infirmary Scene

The Misato Infirmary scene is the first time readers would come to see that something is horribly wrong with Taichi; this being the first week, the concept is made tamer by showing it as "just" his reaction to blood.

There are certainly suspicious parts in it already:

I have fallen into error.
I have arbitrarily concluded that what I can see is unequivocally the normal everyday.
In truth, that is not the case.
CCA0016

But what *is* the mistake, exactly? What we are seeing normally, or this scene? This is left ambiguous.

The real oddity comes straight afterward the scene of strangeness:

Misato: "Sob, sob, sob."
Mai Venus, Senpai, was crying.
Taichi: "Who was it! Who is it that made Senpai cry, show yourself!"
I take a posture of empty-handedness.
Taichi: "My Karade will make you taste defeat!"
Misato: "Sob, sob, sob, sob!"
Taichi: "Senpai, by whom were you attacked?!"
Senpai pointed a finger at me.
Taichi: "To surmount the self is nearly as difficult as pronouncing the words 'self control'!!!"
CCA0016

Posing for his insane and possibly nonexistent "Karade", as gentle Misato cries and points out the villain.

And then:

Misato: "Peke-kun? Peke-kun?"
Taichi: "Ah... yes?"
CCA0016

There is a net separation between the above scene and this part. Although voice work may not be entirely reliable, she's not talking as if she had been sobbing until a second before; in fact, she doesn't seem broken up or much moved by what Taichi did at all.

In fact, it's as if that passage quoted above did not happen, period.

That's because there are not one but *two* delusional portions in this scene: one that looks obviously wrong, with even graphics distorting, and one that doesn't look that obviously wrong, and is in fact sorta joke-like.

Both the weirdness and that part right afterwards are delusional , therefore, *both* are to be expected to appear throughout the story with no big fanfare and, sometimes, little way to distinguish reality from them. In fact, the larger issue is on whether there is a “both” at all and if they're not just the exact same thing seen in different ways.

Here's a somewhat similar scene that starts suspicious and becomes far more so when read through the above:

Sakuraba: "...snooooooore."
Snoring.
Taichi: "Sakuraba?"
Sakuraba: "What?"
CCC0031C

Sakuraba is sleeping... except he talks to Taichi. And then:

Sakuraba: "I can't eat anything anymore."
Taichi: "Seems so..."
Taichi: "I got sandwiches though."
Sakuraba: "Snooore."
CCC0031C

...he ends his talk, and he's asleep. Taichi hypothesizes sleeptalking; *but considering this scene takes place in the infirmary as well, was it?* This won't be the last time that Sakuraba being in a certain location will give a reading key for an event with another character that used to be in that location, nor the last oddity involving scenes in the infirmary.

Now, the core of the "real" delusion in the Misato scene is Taichi's loss of linguistic ability, which would signal his return to normality:

****
Mi**********
Misato*****ke******n?*
Misato: "Pe**...***n?"
Misato: "Peke...*kun?"
Misato: "Peke... kun?"

He claims this is coincidence[lxx], and maybe this specific recovery was, but it's the sequence that's of interest. It's not unique:

Misato: "..........?"
Misato: "..........n?"
Misato: ".....Peke-kun?"
Misato: "Peke-kun, Peke-kun?"
CCB0005

and

She fixed the cameltoe her underwear is giving her!!!
She fixed the camel*** her underwear is giving her!!!!
She ***** the camel*** her underwear is ****** her!!!!
She ***** *** camel*** her ********* is ****** her!!!!
**********!!!!
CCD0008B

The first happens when he goes into Wild Delusion Mode due to seeing Misato's panties; the second when he does the same with regards to Kiri. The first one is interesting in how he'll *again* go into his delusions about Karade right afterwards. The second for being in reverse order, and for this line at the end:

I animalize.
CCD0008B

With all the talk of *beasts* and *insects dressed as humans* , it's odd he doesn't assault Kiri right then and there – and he doesn't, he just surprises her, tells her he saw everything, then leaves as she's too panicky to retaliate. Pure joke... or is this simply the truth of *all* that he does in this kind of scenes?

The difference in the last two is that he doesn't see blood but the trigger is panties, so these look unrelated – except when he lifts Misato's skirt to see said blood in that scene, he *definitely* sees her panties as well! In fact, the moment he does that there's already something oddly off:

A femoral region plump and voluptuous got exposed. Plump and voluptuous.
CCA0016

It's that odd repetition, of the kind he does pretty much whenever he goes 'wrong' that clinches it. Reading carefully through what follows makes it even clearer that whatever happened, it happened the moment Taichi went to expose Misato's leg. *Is it even blood that triggers this seizures of his, or is it just female underwear?* Because we know that peeks at panties create a disconnect of sorts in him, just look at Nanaka.

And that's provided his seizures aren't provoked by simply being spurned:

But the needles set against me... feel like they have a bit of poison in them.
Maybe it's just my imagination, I don't know,
it might just be my excessive self-consciousness, perhaps,
but,
and also however,
just by thinking that,
I had a seizure.
CCA0004

Loss of linguistic skills, possibly hallucinated dialogues, doubts on his fear of blood... it's hard to keep things straight, so let's focus on the issue at hand: the two layers of insanity, one of which looks *nothing* like it at the untrained eye.

How much of what readers are seeing is actually what the characters do and say? How much of the story even exists in the first place?

A quiet, still summer.
Excessively quiet, that even the signs of club activities and classes disappear.
CCA0016

Lines like this should now seem far more explicit in how they point out to a much deeper deception.

IV.II.III.II Careful Now: Touko at the Start

An example of a scene that *may* not happen at all is relatively early in the story, right after first meeting Touko.

Touko: "If you don't let your neurons undergo division but quick, it'll be harsh when you reach adulthood, you know?"
CCA0002

This scene is odd in two ways. First, Touko readily re-engages Taichi after having spurned him, and in a way that sounds relatively friendly, considering. Second and most important, Touko makes a trivia-level error by claiming that brain cells undergo division: this kind of errors are *Taichi*'s domain.

Now, Touko's not the sharpest tool in the shed either, and this may simply be something the two share; the characterization overlaps are enormous. This particular trait of hers is never seen again, however, as her lack of knowledge tends towards the more obvious ignorance towards the plebeian things: french toast, french kiss, bike trailers, canned food, that sort.

It's an early scene, so maybe it was just a characterization that progressed differently, i.e. a plot hole; if so, the similarity between writing error and Taichi's hallucinations struck again, and it became another example of him projecting dialogue on others.

IV.II.III.III Expert Level: Miki & Kiri's Introduction to the Club

When the training wheels come off, right around the end of the second week, things become way harder to distinguish. One scene where this is relatively easy to see is the introduction of the Flowers into the club, which has another thing we haven't seen so far: it's a flashback.

This scene begins comparatively realistically, but things start becoming odd after Taichi gives Kiri and Miki objects that they *cannot* toss away, only given to people in the Nakama (or, given the RPG influences, in the party), as well as odd references to *system messages*.

And then, there's a cut to the sky, and an obvious reference to this being a memory:

With laughter, with anger,
and quite a bit of a festival's revelry.
It's good like this.
This is what memories were supposed to be like.
CCC3004

And then, the Zubaaan game, where everybody plays volleyball (like in another memory, the Beach scene!) using Taichi as the ball, in a replica of what we've seen to be his birth – meaning it's purely metaphorical, the obvious association of this “forgotten” event to another precious memory.

It's easy to make the same mistake that would be made right in the Misato scene and consider only the part *after* the sky cut as "fake". But there's no reason to believe the previous part worked exactly that way.

Tomoki: "You a Magician or something?"
CCC3004

Kiri retaining the doll and the Miki/Taichi autograph game are evidence that part of this has happened, but not much more.

This scene is very precious to Taichi indeed, and it's seen at the beginning of the final route where nearly entirely imaginary scene with the rest of the

club has this scene as background; there's many cross-references and hints to things that have happened and memories Taichi has made in that particular scene, from Sakuraba carrying around a large amount of money in commemorative coins to Miki being poor to - ironically - Touko telling him to keep himself strong, as he taught her in her Sendback route, or Youko saying they can't disgrace their host Mutsumi.

That collation of memories into a single nostalgic warm[lxxi] dream, the happiest moment of this last route before a lengthy fall and then further recovery - if recovery it even is - puts much more weight to the idea of doubting the reality of every part of that first memory.

How long has that process of contamination gone on, after all?

IV.II.IV Memory Leak

The nature of the oddities seen in the last scene examined give a serious hint as to the nature of his memory issues, and a strong concept of *rule* that helps limit the otherwise vague and overpowerful joker of *hallucination.*

All of Taichi's pseudo-scientific knowledge, and all his knowledge about videogaming, are in his memories along with everything else: the Mikiri introduction scene, a memory itself, has been very blatantly contaminated, especially by the latter.

What we have here is a *memory leak*, where some of Taichi's memories are seeping into the rest. We had actually seen one, which is Sakuraba's hair in that dream-within-a-flashback, but that was difficult to read stand-alone[lxxii].

I use the computer term on purpose: there's plenty of computer terms that hang around Taichi himself, starting from the Misato scene above:

Taichi: "Yes, for the changeover of Dual Boot mai OS is now The Endo in Quickly."[lxxiii]
CCA0016

Even Nanaka uses some to describe him:

Nanaka: "Because possibilities have that as their nature! It's like when you go to reset Wi***ws because of problems in the temporary cache[lxxiv] and then you find that it has the same error over again! Especially now it's---"

CCA0023

The "dual boot" thing recalls the idea of a split personality[lxxv], and the *clearing of the temporary cache* is a nice name for what would happen at the end of the day/week.

We also come back to that infirmary example, where the breakdown *may* have been caused by him seeing panties: Taichi seeing panties causes him to drop all that's happening and think about them, which is another trigger-response behavior that's wholly automatic.

So not only is he very much forgetting things so systematically it's possible to *cause* him to forget, at least temporarily, but his memories are also a jumbled mess where the real and the unreal mix, and possibly pretty freely as well. The memories may be movie-like, but it's a movie that has been through post-production and the VFX department, and all readers can do is see if they can find so much as a script or a storyboard.

And if that's so, then this story being in the shape of a Visual Novel may, itself, be nothing more than a further observation error: Taichi's Memory Leak is beginning to pervade his real life[*lxxvi*] as his physical and psychological characteristics begin to slip out from whatever semblance of control he had before the failure of the Training Camp.

There's a part in the ending that all but makes this explicit:

With great armed skill you fought and well, but the scorpions were so many in number that defending from the stabbing of all their poisonous stingers was impossible.
//More scorpions, does seem like it's all pointing to Nanaka. See CCA0004: Touko had poison tips, too. Line was split like this in the console version anyway. -GHS
TP

Eventually your consciousness grew faint, you collapsed, and the scorpions that submerged your body enjoyed the deliciousness of human flesh for the first time in a long while.
Your adventure has ended.
To foil the evil plan of the Warlock Morlock, you must return to Paragraph 1 and redo your adventure from the beginning.
A sufficient blessing of the Goddess in your next adventure we---
CCX0001

This reads straight like a scene from a Choose Your Own Adventure book, which is format that has plenty in common with Visual Novels, to the point where this could be considered an indirect reference to VNs themselves.

Notice the reference to 'scorpions'; this is Nanaka once again.

I apologize for getting a book I read a long time ago mingled with my thoughts.
CCX0001

This is one of the few cases in which he points it out, but how many times does this happen? Certainly his repeated use of RPG terminology like 'equip' or 'random encounter' is telling.

Another example of this is the beginning of Another Story, which is very easy to understand with this idea of *memory leak*. In the first part, he sees scenes that could belong to any slice of life *moege* out there, clichéd to the point of self-parody; in the next part, he is still replaying the same part, but while murdering everyone, who instead doesn't.

The sequence is similar to the progress from Wee k 1 to W eek 2: in the first everyone plays along and there's happiness, if clearly forced, in the second people don't, and it ends in tragedy.

Easy to understand, but ultimately harder to decode: if much of it is fake in ways consistent and explicative of the story, it's therefore a question of *how much* and less one of *whether*.

IV.II.IV.I Remembering What He Shouldn't

In one of the oddest comedy scenes in the story, Taichi ransacks his usually empty house and finds some potatoes[lxxvii]. He roasts them, attracting starving Touko's attention[lxxviii], which leads to the continuation of her route. This information should be lost in the time loop, except he later casually mentions the presence of potatoes in his house as if he remembered:

But come to think of it, it feels as if there's potatoes...
CCC0035A

Kiri: "There were some potatoes however."
Taichi: "Whattity[lxxix], there was something that nice?"
I had a feeling there would be.
CCD3003B

I returned home, gnawed at some potatoes, drank some water, and laid down on the bed.
CCZAS

Yes, even Another Story has them, despite Taichi thinking his home is in the woods.

Now, this information may well have been in the diaries; however, unlike the croquette bread, where he just beelines for it, these are offhand remarks that betray the kind of unfamiliarity that overlaps with the kind of "memory loss" he had with Yutaka and Nanaka.

There are also even more unambiguous examples of him simply remembers things he shouldn't, and in a way that reconnects to the concept of pseudo-MWI Denpa. Not only are more or less fixed events losing their true explanation, but the added explanation is becoming *refined* and therefore even *more* fixed.

What this means is that Taichi is beginning to avoid excessive ruminations and going straight for the explanation he decided, even when he has no grounds to do so, and this is nearly perfectly masked into what may, superficially, look simply like the author cutting to the chase[lxxx].

When he comes to the hokora and reads the diaries, he makes three hypotheses:

1) There is one more personality in me, that is writing on its own;
2) Something written by a future me has ended up here;
3) The same period of time is repeating over and over.
CCC0007

In the Kiri route, he makes a lengthy internal monologue on which could be the correct one, ending in pedantries about *conclusions* and *final words*:

Let's not put the final word to this.
The final word is a reflection from the final destination,
and the process of reaching it is inevitably the process of a judgment.
For what's here, the possibility that I... no, that the world is repeating the same one week period in a neverending loop is high.
And that is where the thoughts stay.
CCC0007

In the Youko route, he simply knows:

Taichi: "It's 3)... isn't it."
Even if there's some other trick, regardless,
in the first place, this is my handwriting[lxxxi].
Taichi: "The world's repeating itself, is that how it is?"
Preposterous nonsense though it may be, explained like that it seems so correct.
I am thankful for my flexibility.
CCD0005A

Notice the *flaunting*: he's being reserved and intellectually careful one moment, he's praising his ability to jump to conclusion the next.

And this isn't remotely as blatant as when he meets Miki again after the reset at the end of her route, the one about the Sakakibara diary:

Miki: "...wanna go home..."
She says something clever,
that this is not our original world.
This here is World'.
Miki's words may have been coincidental, but,
they hit the nail on the head.
CCD0006A

This makes the leap of logic at the Sakakibara Diary look sane in comparison. Miki exclaims she wants to go home, and it's automatically a different world? It's not impossible Miki wanted to precisely make him recall this; after all, she's very likely acting:

Miki: "There is no one inside anyone's house! There's really no one, they're all gone, all!!!"
[...]
Miki: "I woke up this morning, and mother wasn't there, and there wasn't to eat... and that's why I started thinking, what if everybody else is gone too, and..."
CCD0006A

We'll see more when examining Miki, but both of these have trivial explanations: everyone's gone out to work earlier than she goes to school, including her mother. There's some trickery in the word used here for food, as well: *gohan*, in this situation, would mean breakfast; however, since the word doesn't *literally* mean that, and in fact means *cooked rice*, it is far from an invalid interpretation to think there is simply no rice for her at breakfast[lxxxii]. There's none for Taichi, for example, not even in his flashbacks.

Since she buys something from Tasaki every morning, it could be that she's simply to buy something there on credit, usually junk food which she then writes off.

And of course, none of this should make one miss an important detail: *Taichi remembers Miki has reset*.

So weak!!!
Is this sort of like not having enough XP I wonder?
CCD0006A

This Low XP Miki returns in her Sendback route:

For Miki to grow up to be indomitable, how much happiness and coincidences and time would be required?
CCD4001

Expectably from her low XP status, her responses lack sharpness.
CCD4002B

While it's not implausible he wrote about Unreset Miki in the last diary of the Miki route, although it brings the question of *why would Miki allow it*, given everything, there's no way he'd know she has abandoned this Unreset status, as that happens after the last “save point”.

There's of course the possibility that this Low XP Status does not refer to her having reset, but simply to the normal her; given how similar this is to the way Taichi remembers what he *should* have forgotten, from Yutaka to Nanaka to all the above, that possibility seems unlikely.

Nanaka herself, being nothing but memory, is the strongest evidence of Taichi remembering things he says he can't. She is the embodiment of his memories, walking around, smacking him about, and teasing him: this is all part of his Settei.

IV.II.IV.II Forgetting What He Ought Not

The time loop may not erase his memories, although a significant part of it seem to be buried in some ways. We have, however, seen things that 'reset' his short term memory, his *temporary cache* to borrow Nanaka's term:

- Blood
- Sexuality
- Hunger

Blood is obvious: when he sees it, he cracks. ...or at least, he should.

Sexuality is also relatively obvious: when he sees panties, all he was doing he forgets.

Her panties-?!?
Thought pattern interrupted.
Unforeseen erotic events are my weakness.
Incidentally, the short term memory is also wiped without leaving one tiny bit behind.
CCB0002

Nanaka uses this intentionally:

Nanaka: "'chira."
Panties visible for one instant.
Taichi: "uhWOOOOOOOOOH!!!"
Taichi: "uhWOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOH!!!"
CCB0002

And that's the one time when this is *obviously* intentional; for all that's seen of her, it may be that all her biking tricks[lxxxiii] are for this purpose.

But Miki seems aware to this as well, which is at least as suspect as her knowing about Taichi going crazy at the sight of blood:

Miki: "Okay okaaay, that's where it eeends! Glooomp!"
Miki flipped Kiri's skirt.
Kiri: "KYAAAAAH!!!"
Taichi: "...oh."
Appetites of the flesh reawakening!
CCC4014

These have been hinted, but what's not been seen much is how hunger seems to make him forget things he did just the evening before:

Taichi: "...s-, so damn late those two!!!"

I'm so hungryyy.
[...]
Kiri: "Good morning, Kurosu-senpai."
Taichi: "...you're late!"
Kiri: "Eh... but you said that noon would be fine, Kurosu-senpai."
Taichi: "Did I now?"
It feels like I did...
CCD3003B

This is particularly ironic considering this is Sendback, therefore Taichi is well out of the influence of the time loop. Ironic, and likely intentional as well.

And of course, there was how he forgets *himself* with hunger, as visible with the belly bug dialog scene. The irony there is that he often has dialogues with Nanaka, meaning imaginary characters aren't rare around him; then again, a vivid imagination, by itself, doesn't make him particularly crazy.

Sometimes his sense of time is obviously shot:

Taichi: "I have. We were having club training camp up until recently."

That's an odd way to say “yesterday”, isn't it? Although that first Nanaka scene is explicitly a dream, this line is also odd:

Girl: "On your Summer Break?"

How would she not know that it was Summer Break, when it ended literally that very day? And why isn't Taichi surprised at the question?[lxxxiv]

And sometimes, the line between simple joke, meta-joke and this is very weak:

Taichi: "Why are you going 'woof, woof'?"
Touko: "Because as a punishment for losing at chess you made me talk like a dog dammit!!!"

Taichi: "Ahhh, was that it."
I forgot.
CCB2017

Of course he forgot; the part where he tells her to do this is never seen on-screen. By meta-rules, that part simply didn't happen. But of course he's just pulling her leg... *maybe*.

IV.II.V When Taichi Remembers: Erratic Sleep Patterns

The *when* of Taichi's remembering, or rather, *projects this onto the world*, is definitely a sign of a possibly serious physical or psychological issue.

If a week is a day, and therefore Taichi's sense of time and week is completely out of sync with reality, then he'd have seriously problematic sleep patterns; he'd wake up near 1 AM, thinking it dawn, and go to sleep for 45 minutes or so every couple of hours. An entire day, for him, is just two hours and a half.

This erratic sleeping pattern should remind of a videogame's night and day cycle; think Castlevania II with its 6-minute day. In more human terms, this is similar to the compressed sleep cycle of a baby's – and Taichi is indeed regressing to infanthood in more than a sense: after all, that's where the memories of his mother are, which are leaking into reality as the replay of the moment of his birth, the 'zubaaan', begins to be used by other characters in his memory and in his life.

Adjusting this sleep pattern with the reality of the world isn't necessarily simple, perhaps outright impossible. It's easy to understand why there would be no one out at 1AM when he leaves for school; he is known to be able to climb the fence effortlessly, and knows how to pick locks so being at school at that time is easily explained.

Him pretending it's day when it's the dead of night, or the wrong hour in general, is explained with his eyes: he has good night vision anyway, and the rest he just sort of hallucinates as his broken sleep patterns make the world slip out of focus. He even all but says that merely closing his eyes makes it night:

Night.
Darkness therefore night.
The times when I close my eyes are also dark,
and are mistaken for night.
Open them, and noon.
I create and destroy the world every time I blink.
CCD5001

Although intended to be read as simply a metaphor of how the tediousness of being chained to a bed makes him lose the sense of time, as this takes place through the Youko Sendback route, this can be expanded to apply to the entirety of the story.

And his eyes are indeed what decides whether it's day or night, whether the world is there or not: despite having little credibly scientific or pseudo-scientific to them, they still act that way because his mind makes that real, if only to himself; his possible vision issues, such as an improved night vision and corresponding diminished day vision[lxxxv], help in this self-deception.

That specific scene contains even more on the concept of *tediousness* that may be what generates the concept of time loop as well. Certainly, it being Youko that keeps him prisoner in that sequence will have to be examined in the light of the concept of Settei generation.

But while the day-night confusion is relatively simple, as to *why* the rest of the club would be at school at 1AM is not so. Misato's known to be there at night, and maybe Tomoki is keeping his eyes on her, and Touko is there earlier than even Taichi so maybe she *is* there through the night, and who knows what Sakuraba does; but are Miki and Kiri so lonely the must be together pretty much since the break of d--- you know what, forget it, it's only somewhat harder to imagine as to why everyone would be playing Taichi's game of disappeared mankind.

It's certainly no coincidence that most of the content in most routes after the first one plays out between Wednesday and Sunday: in the 0.108 ratio, that's

roughly from 7AM to 18 PM, that is, normal school day.

Now, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Taichi's flashbacks are not just dreams, but also automatisms and déja vù; however, even in his automatism he is not necessarily entirely conscious or fully responsive. This, combined with the odd sleep patterns means he would be losing consciousness or at the very least focus for periods of time.

The latter was actually explicitly seen when Misato calls him back with that oddly asterisk-laced sequence of phrases, as seen while analyzing the Infirmary scene, so it's easy to hypothesize that it happens more often; what's not immediately apparent is that the former is also seen:

Miki: "Huh, he's asleep?!"
Miki: "He just uses people, and then he himself sleeeeeeeps!"
CCC3018

It's very easy to conclude that Miki is not kidding here at all: Misato is *shown* to have knocked him out, but she stays silent on the subject, and so does Kiri. Why? This question goes double considering telling Miki would likely stop her from taking Taichi's trousers off.

This becomes extremely interesting considering Yutaka, who has bouts of narcolepsy that are unexplained and otherwise uncommented upon – except for being hinted at having the same origin as his mental issue that prevents him from moving his feet.

The reason why he does, in light of this, becomes simple: as a characterization parallel for Taichi, who has something similar.

Given how easily the two get along, and how much they share from the sex division system onwards to their psychologically damaged physique (feet for Yutaka, hair for Taichi), and how Taichi has his share of mental issues originating from that event, it would be a bigger mystery if they *didn't* share this than otherwise.

And so, how many times throughout the story is Taichi “knocked out”, in the sense that he has a bout of narcolepsy?

IV.II.VI Taichi's Memory: Perfect Memorization Without Perfect Recall

The conclusion from all this is that Taichi's memory indeed appears perfect: he remembers pretty much everything he sees and does, all the way from his birth – literally, given Zubaaan.

The problems begin when it's time to actually *recall* this memory.

Taichi's recall is generally *associative*, as in trigger → response, and *unconscious*, as in he doesn't necessarily notice that he his remembering, or even loses adherence to reality when he does. This difficulty in consciously recalling will push these memories onto reality in the form of minor details, as seen in the scene where he first meets Yutaka in Kamisaka.

Problems begin when things he has read or experienced in videogames, which aren't real, *leak* into his other memories, creating impossible events in them; this leak then plausibly continues into his perception of reality, creating anything from fictional characters like Nanaka – but is it just her? – to plausibly a 'censorship' of reality, which would be the reason why he no longer perceives mankind and why there's a time loop.

Plausibly, later memories themselves leak into the older memories, explaining why he is confused about the starting point of the color of his hair, and putting the credibility of flashbacks in even more doubt.

In all this, the idea of his *eyes* have superpowers is not technically incorrect: this mental condition is compatible with the idea of him unconsciously censoring sights (and sounds, as the cicadas would still be buzzing and people would still be chatting) he dislikes or can't manage. Lie led to greater truth.

But his retreat into an imaginary world is far from perfect, because if it was, then the Club would always stay together. This will have to be thematically

examined: if he can create a perfect world within his memories where everything goes his way, *why doesn't he just do that?*

This problematic behavior is coherent with the definition of his madness, which he calls Altered State[lxxxvi] or Denatured Consciousness:

Denatured Consciousness.
Abnormal mental condition.
Internal mental status functions expressing thoughts and emotions autonomously, visible in many possible ways of which one example are their expression through oddities of speech and conduct. Acquiring an overwhelming feeling of omnipotence and experiencing visual hallucination close to tangible apparitions or ghosts is possible. Religious experience trip trance... etc.
CCX0001

Autonomous behavior. Oddities of speech and conduct. Thinking himself the Creator and holding the trigger on a bomb that could destroy mankind. Tangible ghost(s). All true, all seen. Despite coming right before that thing about the eyes, and superficially looking as silly and overwrought as that, this is nothing of the sort. So: religious experience, drug-fueled trip or simply random trance?

IV.III Automatic Behavior

One concept seen around memories, and closely tied with the concept of *fixation* of events and explanations, is that of *automatism* . Taichi himself describes the behavior of (more or less allegedly) broken people like him as *automatic* :

Taichi: "You're pretty healthy and sound so... I don't expect you to understand, but..."
Taichi: "This got nothing to do with will."
Taichi: "Us guys are... automatic."
Tomoki: "Automatic... you said... but what does that..."
Taichi: "When that kind of circumstances come by, the response can't be but that."
Taichi: "Always, without fail."

Taichi: "All the love there is, all the bonds there are, all irrelevant."
Taichi: "The exact dead center of the brain makes it so."
Taichi: "Rationality can't control it."
Taichi: "That's why... it's possible that even if you love... you will end up breaking."
Rather, in proportion to the interest given,
there is a want to touch with fingertips that have turned blades.
Taichi: "And mostly, we hate that part of ourselves."
CCD1001B

Stimulus → response with no rational control, and self-hatred for that. He blames something physical, as well, which will be interesting to see.

He even states out loud that his continued coming to school is nothing but automatism:

Taichi: "As a possessor of an Innocence License, for the purpose of acting out the sensitive and brittle heart of a teenager that was left behind in this world, I am going to depict that nihility of the soul that I should perhaps better call its automatic module via the repetition of the ordinary routine that is a commute to school."
CCB2006

...a fairly transparent rationalization, as well[lxxxvii]. Automatism returns in Another Story, in the "second" day, so there's more emphasis on how negative it can be:

My Mode is already very much wrong,
however, I understand that I have become fairly automatic.
CCZAS

And just like with the computer part, this automatism is part of how Nanaka scolds him:

Nanaka: "Once, just once, live like your life's precious! But you get caught in the moment and always, but always make it all a waste, and before you know it your very existence is stuck into fixed behaviors[lxxxviii]!"

CCA0023

That his *mother* would do that becomes almost ironic considering a showcase of Taichi's automatism around Yusa:

Taichi: "You fitting in well at school?"
Yusa: "That question... you just ask me that every time, right Taichi-san?"
Taichi: "Hmmm, do I?"
Now that she mentions it, I sure do.
Taichi: "It's sort of like a fixed form for me. A cushion for conversations."
CCA0020

Little Yusa, in her apparent innocence, would possibly have less issues than most at pressing Taichi on his insistence at repeating the same patterns of questions and behavior[lxxxix]. This kind of repeating the same questions over and over to the point of annoying the children is something more expectable from someone far older than Taichi.

And that this semi-senility is the correct reading is shown right afterwards:

Taichi: "Still, you've gotten sooo big now, Yusa-chan!"
CCA0020

I suspect most readers will be able to relate to this kind of statements, repeated over and over by a grandmother/grandfather at just about every meeting of their own grandchild, making them all but uncomfortable.

This *usage as filler* hints that certain behaviors concerning interpersonal interaction is performed automatically by him long before the time loop. This is of course important given the issue of the nonexistence of the time loop requires some kind of explanation for why people keep taking the same actions and talking about the same things over and over and over.

Specifics are for character analysis, but there's really nothing complex behind this. Go to a political forum, or a videogame forum, or any specialized forum and read up on some obvious flamebait of an argument, and watch the same argument go on and on and on and on and on, in

multiple threads, across multiple years, with multiple participants and in completely separate forums[xc].

And, well, Tomoki sums it up; and he's not kidding nor going on a tangent:

Tomoki: "'cause you know... wouldn't it be better to put the older men in old men communities where they can keep those discussions about Gun**m that they're so good at spiraling on endlessly?"
CCA0019

In fact, given Tomoki appears to know that Taichi works like this, it's to wonder whether he is literally referring to Taichi – whether he's consciously aware he is or not

Bonus exercise: look for similarities of behavior between things that *should* be entirely unrelated, e.g. political forums and videogame forums. The true depth of this apparent oddity cannot be fully understood until one has a fairly firm grip on the *utter predictability* of much of mankind.

Senile behavior in young people is something of a madness itself, which connects back to the idea of whether the test had any point at all: are the people in Gunjou mad because the test says so, or do they just happen to seem mad because they're human and the test may well be drawing straws?

It's not even anywhere near the forefront of the story's themes, and yet, there it is even that. And then, drawing straws... well, *we'll see*.

Automatism isn't just speech but *behavior*, and Taichi has its fair share of it. One nearly-transparent examples come fairly early:

My hand extended with nonchalance towards the chest of this smiling girl.
[...]
Taichi: "Sorry, alien hand syndrome, it just went on its own."
CCA0009B

This early in the story it's meant to be read as nothing but a joke, that Taichi is just your typical Perverted Protagonist; of course it's nothing of the sort,

as we've seen the sexual is something that immediately works to reset him; here, however, it's how he *goes* for looking at Miki's panties that's fixed: he is serious, his hand *literally moved by itself*.

This event, however, happened as consequence of the reader selecting a choice, and here we can see something of the meta, perhaps; but is this representative of a choice available to Taichi, or only to the reader?

This would require much more examination on the meta, but another Miki scene comes to help here:

- Look at panties
- Look at panties
- Look at panties
- *Look at panties*
- Look at panties

CCB0007

Despite being nominally a choice, the *only* choice available to him is to that. He even points that out:

Taichi: "Naaah, it was because there were no other choices for me..."

CCB0007

As much is in Cross Channel, it's only a joke until considered seriously. Near the end of the story he'll comment as this:

It seems I ended up as someone who just looks at panties.

CCX0001

At that point of the story, Taichi is *still* struggling with this fixedness: most of the scenes he sees are events of the story, mixed and intermingled together in a nearly incomprehensible *zibaldone*[xci], details that yet manage to make him emerge from much of his madness and remember his true oldest memories.

And yet, even then, there's no choice for the reader there, in fact, there's very few meaningful choices total. Whether that is true for Taichi as well, and his ending there was always a foregone conclusion is difficult to tell outside the obvious fact of this being a novel, visual or otherwise.

IV.III.I Constructing Fixed Patterns

We've seen memory, we've seen interactions, but there's even more: Taichi attempts throughout his history to repeat previous events. This should come without saying given the time loop, but it's interesting to see when this is done *explicitly* rather than simply being implied.

One year before the story starts, Taichi gathered the Club for a beach outing. It's not quite clear what the various relationships were back then, and part of it does seem written fairly early in plotting [xcii] . The means he uses are coercive, and no one seems particularly happy to be there, but ultimately they had fun.

So when the club falls apart for good a year later, after the death of Yutaka and the total alienation of Kiri, Taichi's very difficult breakup with Touko and him trying to push down Yusa, and Misato selling out her father, he tries again.

Literally:

I roused myself, and gathered everyone.
With more or less coercive ways.
I used similar ways for last year's beach outing as well.
If I drag them out once, then they are all mine.
And it all led to the daring establishment of the Mandatory Annual Summer Training Camp.
CCC0002

If he does it once, then it's gonna work again and again, won't it? That last term seems more sarcastic than realistic, though the camp somehow happening every Summer for the (possibly) five years the story sounds less silly in retrospect than it perhaps should be.

And, well, it sort of does. This is the beach:

Touko: "I was told that Hasekura-senpai had something very important to talk to me about the future."
CCA0027

This is the rooftop at the end of the first week:

Touko: "I only came in becausHe HasHekura-sHenpai told me to come!"
CCA0030

End of the second week:

Touko: "Hasekura-senpai sent me a letter attached to an arrow, saying she needs to... talk to me."
CCB0022

...and *every single time* she falls for it. You can bet she got involved in the Training Camp the exact same way, so even if those last two quotes are separated by an actual time loop, she still fell for the exact same trick no less than three times.

As for what happens at those events, even those have little similarities. For example, this is the end of the second week:

I send eye signals to Touko.
Taichi: (Touko) (Touko) (Please!)
CCB0022

He did something nearly identical to Kiri in the Beach scene (except this time Touko explicitly mentions he's not getting through to her).

And the reason he does all this is theoretically nice:

Taichi: "I wanted everyone to get along again."
Taichi: "I wanted our relationships to return like they were in the good old days!"

CCC3019A

And therein lies the problem: he wants things to go back to where they were. *Literally so*. And he's not the only one to, remaining on the subject of Touko:

Touko: "...I've... had enough... of here..."
Touko: "It's scary... in this school... I wanna go back..."
Where does she even want to go back to?
Not to her former school or anything of the sort, definitely,
but to those former days of hers, now long past.
CCD2002

Unfortunately, time loop or not, things change; the world marches on, Edens fall, relationships end. Repeating the exact same pattern that worked once doesn't lead to the same result: the Beach pattern did not work in the Camp.

And this is a plausible origin for the time loop: since he lucked out in that one week after the Camp in getting everyone together one more time, he makes that one week Fixed until he realizes it's not going to work anymore and sends everyone out of his playground world.

The problem is that by that point he's just too broken to fully come out himself. Regardless, the “time loop” has gone on for far longer than this one week.

IV.IV Taichi's Settei – Non-Violent Manic Episodes

Returning to the subject of this Altered State and the possible hallucinations that come with it, there are several scenes in the VN that showcase a very special kind of madness, much more different than his usual odd behavior *and* from the scenes of him snapping – although there's compatibility with those, for this examination they'll be considered as separate.

The short description of these scenes would be *manic* and *made up* :

I prefer times where the tension can be kept high.

In times where it can't, my heart sinks.
CCC3015

These lines come on the heels of Kiri becoming altogether too docile for Taichi, who likes her high-strung and receptive, however delusional his wish might be given that that's not how Kiri really is.

Here's a brief list of the scenes:

- The Misato infirmary scene (**CCA0016**).
  Not the attack caused (possibly) by blood, but *afterwards*, the part about Karade.
- The memory edits in the Mikiri introduction scene (**CCC3004**).
  The memory itself is pretty manic, but that's likely not made-up; the part afterwards, however, is far more suspect.
- Most of the diary writing in Week 1.
  This is the most puzzling. There's absolutely no reason for him to write as if he had an audience[xciii], and his insistent[xciv] addition[xcv] of[xcvi] irrelevant[xcvii] footnotes[xcviii] is particularly odd, given how they're apparently recorded in the diary itself according to when he reads it again in the beginning of the Kiri route.
- Hearing disembodied martial artists in the full Beach flashback (**CCA0027**) and in the Touko vs. Camera scene (**CCB2015**).
  The first can be dismissed as memory leak, although it's interesting how he got smacked right before that, but there's no excuse for the second and less so given what Touko is capable to do with that sword. Considering the concept of fixed possibilities, it's possible an association has been made in Taichi's mind that led from the first misremembering to the second hallucination.
- The Folie à Deux in the Kiri route (**CCC3002**).
  This will require detailed analysis as it's a duet with Miki, who keeps up effortlessly with Taichi. It's capped off with a physically questionable molestation technique on Kiri, as well.
- The Belly Bug scene (**CCB2002**).
  Already mentioned, this is interesting in how it's triggered by hunger. This scene lasts until Touko passes out in front of the house, so it's notable for being *interrupted* by a diegetic audience.

- The rice cooking scene in the same route (**CCB2020**)
  This is a half-sequel to the above scene, except it's ~~DELISHIOUS RAISU-desu~~ rice
- The WC scene from Youko Sendback (**CCD5001**).
  Although technically part of how Taichi refuses to take Youko seriously, it goes all the way through the mini sex scene, with a ridiculous wall of text. Notable because, unlike the two above, it doesn't end with a diegetic audience. Maybe.
- All scenes with Nanaka
  They count as well, with the only outlier being that scene mentioned right before.
- The Kiri chase scene (**CCC0011C**)
  Of particular interest in how he's stopped by a character that *doesn't exist*.
- The slow dissembling in his finale (**CCX0001**).
  Very interesting how Taichi's descent into madness is a move towards *suicide*, not mass murder.
- The scene before Sakuraba when choosing not to follow Kiri in her route (**CCC3012A**).
  This one is pretty interesting, and we'll see it in a moment.

Things to note: none of these scenes include what could be reasonably considered to be a dangerous side to Taichi; he is not doing much that is dangerous at all, in fact; and many include no audience outside of the reader.

This last one is where the oddity comes to the surface:

> [N]ihilistic conversations and thoughts working to protect the consciousness in the stead of rationality.
> So as to cover with muddy water the sewage being blown out.
> **CCX0001**

So why would Taichi act like that *by himself* if those acts, as this line right after the Altered State explanation implies, are just to dress the monster he truly is to deceive *others* ? Is he aware of the readers somehow? Or is the deception primarily for *himself*?

This strangeness further hints to a *problem of self-diagnosis* that goes well beyond making up weird explanations for his eyes.

IV.IV.I A Sign of Humans? Mutsumi

Of all the scenes above, there's one oddity in **CCC3012A**, when Taichi doesn't follow Kiri, on which I'd like to focus for the moment. It's not actually quite clear *why* this choice forces Taichi into suicide, as very little changes in the story (including the scene where that 'high tension' quote appears[xcix]), but one particular is very odd.

In this scene, Taichi is worried about a 'presence', which he considers to be an alien of sorts. This presence is never seen and never followed up on; one may guess it's simply Taichi worried about Youko hurting Kiri, but that would be borderline psychic, wouldn't it? Plus, Youko doesn't go do anything to Kiri in that choice.

On the other hand, there may be an explanation. In the scene, he eventually enters Mutsumi's room:

Ah, dust's been accumulating.
...I'll sweep up a bit later.
Apologies, Mutsumi-san.
I withdraw with a bow.
CCC3012A

On simple reading, Taichi's just apologizing to his memories of Mutsumi, and promising to dust up her room. But there's one oddity here: there's *no way* Mutsumi's room has gotten that dusty in just the few days since the start of the week.

And then, Taichi *coincidentally* decides to go into Youko's room:

I catapult myself into the room and at the same time, I dance!
Taichi: "Ha! S'yah! Ter'yaah!!!"
Dust and pride fluttering and dancing.
Taichi: "....."

There is no one.
Taichi: "The hell am I doing..."
I was embarrassed.
I leave the room.
Perhaps because of my boastful struggle in the middle of dust, my throat was parched.
CCC3012A

Room which is *actually* dusty. He "dances" in this room for a while, then the whole scene of madness ends as Sakuraba comes by; what follows is strongly separate from this, although Youko's visit is at the very least perplexing.

An alternative explanation of this scene is simple to make: Taichi felt the presence of Mutsumi returning from her being so often away [c] , goes to her room to say hello, she tells him to dust Youko's former room, and he goes and does it.

This explains the presence he feels, why he appears to lose interest in the chase, and why Taichi is so adamant for Youko not to enter the house [ci] as well. What it doesn't explain is why Taichi would lie to himself (and the reader) this way, although perhaps, part of the reason he had to "die" - whatever this will mean in a world that doesn't work the way it looks like it does - is that he broke facade too much.

It's important to notice that apparent internal questions heard outside is seen quite explicitly at the beginning of the pre-credits finale:

Tomoki: "What're even your priorities, nee-san!"
Hahah, 'nee-san'?
You mean 'onee-chan', right?
Tomoki: "Shaddap you, I'm at the time of self reliance, ah' am!"
CCX0001

While it's technically the complementary of this, where characters who don't exist hear Taichi's internal voice, this changes actually little if the

absence of Mutsumi is no less imaginary than the presence of these characters.

IV.IV.II A Sign of Humans? The Empty Kouban

While we're here, there's another scene similar to the possible trace of Mutsumi seen above.

There is a subtle but significant difference between Taichi's visit at a police box in the first week, and one in a later week. In the first week, Thursday morning, Taichi passes in front of a police box on the way to school, finds it deserted, robs it of a pair of handcuffs, and plays a far too serious prank on Misato. When he goes to revisit it not an hour later, he sees a sign that says they are on patrol:

A notice is up outside that says 'on patrol', and no one is inside.
CCA0021

However, on Friday night in the Kiri route, he discusses it in ways very suspicious:

On the way back, I ostentatiously pass back and forth in front of the kouban.
CCC3007

He passes in front of it many times, as if hesitating to go inside – why? He goes in, touches nothing, asks some internal questions in ways similar to the Mutsumi scene, and then leaves without doing anything.

In all this, one thing is conspicuously missing: *any references to that "On Patrol" sign*. Remember how strange it was when the one item that would definitely prove Combat the dog has been kidnapped (his discarded chain) was never ever pointed out, thus leaving the possibility on the table that he had just picked up and left, as he had been said to do? Here's another riff on the same verse.

Imagining a dialogue with him and one or more policemen inside the kouban, understanding, perhaps even warned about Taichi's possible

behavior, but ultimately not quite concerned about him being there is not difficult.

What's harder, in fact, is accounting for Taichi passing in front of that kouban on his school commute: the kouban is said to be near the station, which is at least half his school commute away from Gunjou in a completely different direction. Yet he is at school on time to have a chat with Misato and handcuff her at 7:50 AM[cii] (the time is given), all when he is known to wake up at 7AM.

There's some speculation possible given the 108/1000 ratio, but as it all too often happens, little more.

If the time given is on the *inside clock*, then it isn't 7:50 Thursday but shortly after 8:30 AM: if he wakes up at 7 in *outside clock* and is at school an hour and 10-20 minutes later on a commute of usually around half an hour, that is, 7:50 in his *delusion* time, this isn't much of a problem.

Splitting the one external day across more than one day, however, sort of is. And there's the possibility he's just that quick, or that the train station and the kouban aren't intended that far off the path despite the map; this is the first week, and it's not certain that humanity's disappearance and the time loop even exist at this point.

This also serves as an example of how difficult it is to make his delusion time correlate precisely to the events, despite how the ratio otherwise explains the discrepancies of time seen around the time loop and right after the end of the Training Camp.

IV.V Taichi's Settei - To Go Back to That Time

All Settei need a location; the one in space is well and provided, but the one in *time* is just as relevant given the problem of maintaining consistency in a time loop delusion when the real world would be moving on ahead.

The days are given: the story takes place from Monday September 7th to the following Sunday, September 13th. There aren't many years that have

the 7th of September fall on Monday, so there are three candidates: 1986, 1998, 2009.

1986 can be excluded immediately: the technology seen is too late, and the Showa era (1926-1989) is said to have ended quite some time before.

2009 should also be off: the technology shown is actually outdated by the game's release date. The club room features a boom box, of all things, a row of what look like early Macintosh computers, and a CRT TV. Odd considering they are said to use top of the line equipment there, and CRTs were already on their way of replacement by the release date. Taichi's computer is also CRT, and he has a very '90s cassette tape deck with CD player in his bedroom.

What remains is 1998, and this is further proven by a close examination of most references, which rarely go beyond this year. Except for some casual references to Visual Novel cornerstones like Kanon, or then-recent Type-Moon spinoff Melty Blood, almost all of the references can be traced, at most, to days[ciii] before September 7th 1998.

The time loop window would therefore be the week from September 7th, 1998 to September 14th, 1998.

The only serious contradiction to this would be Taichi's casual mentions of it being the 21st century:

> There's no basis to even think that in the 21st Century there would do something blatant to that extent, not in this present of great praise to the destruction of the storytelling staple of the end of the century being cut short and mankind led to its Downfall.
> **CCC0007**

...but in the end, who in the end of the '90s didn't refer to things as the 21st century? I personally did. It's a very subtle play with people's expectations compared to some we've already seen; and keep this line in mind: this may look like hypocritical humor, but the truth is far more interesting.

IV.V.I CRTs vs. LCDs

Graphics in Cross Channel, and background graphics especially, tend to be unreliable to say the least. Consider Taichi's obviously non-white hair, Misato's black hair somehow referred to as brown (but is that even a mistake...?), or the Tasaki store background having an obviously lit traffic light and not matching the map quite correctly[civ]. Therefore, noticing the existence of CRT monitors in the graphics is, itself, unreliable.

In fact, there's an apparent contradiction: when carrying equipment from the club room to the rooftop, a reference is often made to *monitors* of some sort, which brings the question of *what* are these people doing with computer monitors up there.

I suspect there's been a miscommunication between the writer and the graphics team, because *monitoring equipment* makes more sense: frequency counters etc[cv]. However, there's at least one line that proves *some* of these are supposed to be CRTs:

> Ahhh, but this girl can't even lift one of those CRT monitors on her own power then.
> **CCC3012A**

All this brings us to an oddity that comes near the end of the story:

> In the six-tatami space there exist three PCs with LCD monitors.
> **CCE0001**

The Gunjou Broadcast Club with its likely top tier budget and a ruthless president[cvi], with a digital camera despite Miki having to use film cameras (ergo digital is *not* widespread), doesn't have LCD monitors - but Youko does? This is odd, and a very specific contrast.

If there's no time loop and time marches on, then the ending scene takes place a number of years *after* 1998. This is more or less confirmed looking at the scenes: while the hour of the day more or less matches the noon/evening discrepancy, as the characters are all doing evening and post-school activities, the time period does not; the Kiri and Miki scene would

date that ending towards the end of a semester and the beginning of a Summer vacation, rather than its dragging end.

IV.IV.II Loop Exit Date?

And so, is it possible to calculate exactly *how long* Taichi is in this "time loop", then? Perhaps. Unlike the time loop itself, which had fairly solid math behind it, there's very little hints on this and it requires a logic jump, although one that will sound plausible with later information.

The math is given by Miki, once again, or perhaps Taichi's hallucination of her in the finale:

> And I, for roughly fourteen hours, fixed a stare on the underwear.
> As far as time is concerned it was an event about four seconds long.
> **CCX0001**

If around four seconds are 14 hours, then a day is 6,8 seconds. Given it's approximated, we can just go with **7** seconds. A week is 49 seconds, and it's 1,22 weeks per minute, total of 1**7**7**1** weeks in a single day. These numbers are not random: **7** will return and be very important, together with the **8** obtained by summing 1+7 and 7+1. Notice that 1+7+7+1=16 and 1+6=7.

Now, let's return to the initial consideration: *a week is a day*, therefore 1771 would be the number of *days*, not of *weeks*.

Thanks to the magic of Timeanddate.com , with the start date of September 7-13 of 1998, the end date would be the week of July 14-20 of 2003.

It's not a random date, as it's a complete week; it's not two months before the game's release date; it fits the relatively slight technological increase; most importantly, it's plausibly the last week before Summer break in Japan, very likely Saturday 19th[cvii]. This fits it being the last day of school in the Miki and Kiri scene post credits.

However, this number is less than the tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands of loops claimed. To better establish this, another point would be required; for example, calculating the number of notebooks inside the hokora: that

would represent the absolute minimum number of repeated weeks and therefore days.

At the end of **CCD0023** , Taichi describes the hokora as full to the brim, so that's the starting point. The volume of the hokora isn't given, but it's said that Taichi can just about fit in it if he really tries, so a guesstimate is still possible.

A B5 college notebook would have a volume of about 44 cm^3; a typical human body weighing 66 kilos would have an absolute minimum volume of 66000 cm^3; that would put the absolute lowest number of notebooks in the hokora to about 1500. Considering the volume would be higher, given Taichi is scrunched up and not melted into pure water, but not that much as he credibly weighs less than 66Kg[cviii] and fits so snugly he describes himself as cuboid, the very rough guesstimate of the number of B5 notebooks required to completely fill the hokora to the brim has to be between 1500 and 2000.

I don't find the math satisfying, especially that jump from 1771 weeks to 1771 days, but too many things match up for this to be entirely coincidence.

IV.IV.III Playing That Game With the 98

Regardless of whether it's possible to calculate the end date, the setting being 1998 has an odd effect on a scene that appears unrelated.

In the first week, Tomoki's visit is accompanied by an oddly random invitation to play a game on the "98", intending the NEC PC-98. This ends with Tomoki, the PC boy, demonstrating he doesn't know what the PC-98 is[cix] – which would be impossible given his archetype, and therefore an intentional twist on it – then launching in an tirade against "old people" that would make anyone doubt whether Tomoki's Conformity Coefficient score ought to be that low.

But it's the invitation *itself* that's strange. If the game Taichi plays is set in a single perpetual week in 1998, then:

Taichi: "So anyway, wanna come in and play a game with the 98 (pronounced 'kyuppachi')?"
CCA0019

...may not mean what it looks like[cx] at all. In reference to this scene, I'll be referring to Taichi's great big delusion as the 98 Game, although the precise reason why will become obvious once looking at Miki and more importantly at Youko.

Speaking of which: why would Taichi put Tomoki in charge of *disk swap*, especially considering how similar that is to that "dual boot OS" thing as he defines it? How come he does that right after Tomoki asks him to get Youko onto Touko's case? And why would there be "errors" if Youko were not to obey him?

All questions to keep in mind.

IV.IV.IV The Lost Decade

The big issue with all this remains *why is so little change seen* if there's a discrepancy of five years (at least!) between the start of the story and its ending. The reason the club room would remain the same is simple: the Club is all but disbanded months before the story starts and this never changes no matter how hard Taichi tries.

All but disbanded, but not formally so: no new club is formed and no new people are recruited because the people in it aren't actually advancing in classes. Being held off for a year is routine in Gunjou:

Repeating class years is an ordinary event.
CCC3001

The reason why the rest changes so little is simple: *Japan*. The nation has been technologically and socially pretty much frozen since the late '80s, in a phenomenon known as *lost decade*. This monograph isn't the place for detailed discussion on the phenomenon, but suffice to say not everything has advanced visibly in there; routine usage of fax machines way into the 2010s is well heard of, and not unique actually but just visiting some of the

websites in Japan reveals technology that is positively ancient by the standards of the time of writing[cxi].

Another characteristic of this Japan is *demographic decline*: the idea of people disappearing, especially younger ones, is very easy to consider an allegory for this. Schools in Japan, and classes themselves, have become harder to fill in recent years, this has played part in more than one series of manga and anime, and that was certainly visible as far as 2003 if not longer.

And so, a mere five years in a country with this phenomenon, with a culture that loves having things in its own organized place and a certain resistance to change, demographic decline, and a valley lost between the mountains as well, makes this lack of evident change actually very believable.

And brings together back to the point of pseudo-MWI: regardless of boredom and routine, the world of Cross Channel is one that is *generally invariant*. This is another element that would help the pseudo-deterministic Fixation of events into an unchanging world of a single week of a single year.

IV.V Taichi's Settei - Shimura Phenomenon and the SF Interpretation

Outside the "scientific" explanation given, which has every element to conclude it's not intended to be taken seriously in any way except very laterally, there's another pseudo-pseudoscientific explanation given: the Shimura Phenomenon. This will lead somewhat far away from the point, as all too often happens, but more importantly, it starts relatively distant: from the letters SF.

These exist in Western characters in the Japanese script, which may look odd, but it's actually not; they typically denote science-fiction, and Cross Channel doing this is not an uncommon nor a strange thing to do.

But as has happened a few times already, assuming the obvious here is to be set up[cxii]. There's of course a reason for why the acronym "SF" is left literally in my translation at every instance, because there are at least four things that SF can stand for in the story:

- *Sci-Fi*
  This is obvious and the concept has been discussed, if largely rejected.
- *Somewhat Freaky*
  Originally Sukoshi Fushigi (somewhat *mysterious*), it's a minor running gag that starts from the beginning of the second route.
- *FlyingShine*
  Or FS, this is an intentional inversion found in a scene with Miki in script **CCC0016A**, scene which has the payoff for the Somewhat Freaky gag. This further suggest a Meta-VN interpretation, which will be seen later, *and* contains an oddity: Miki never suggests Sci-Fi as a meaning for the acronym.
- *Shimura Phenomenon*
  Although phenomenon begins with 'ph' in English, the Japanese transliteration is 'fenomenon'[cxiii].

Even if the Shimura Phenomenon itself is never written with the transliteration, instead using the Japanese kanji form, using the English word is far from reaching: there's plenty of cases of English word usage, and it'll even be a part of the theme as we'll see at the end of this monograph, but using SF for Shimura Phenomenon can be justified in simpler ways.

Shimura is written 志村 *volition* and *town* . Certainly The Will of the Town is an interesting thing for a phenomenon to be named as, given the events taking place in Kamisaka and that “little” thing about coincidence and everybody dying, but it has another reading: *four* and *town* .

This ties back to SF double bind: Misato's name is written 見里, *sight* and *village* , but it can also be read *three* and *village* . Number-synonym for town is the same pattern as Shimura, and more interestingly, 3+4= **7** – it keeps returning, and we're a long ways away before that will make sense, unfortunately.

More relevant, outside of Taichi and his narration, the first and *only* person to use the words *Somewhat Freaky* is Misato herself, so t his connection

Shimura ↔ Misato is already strong enough that it would bear cross-examination.

First, let's see the description of the Shimura Phenomenon itself:

* Shimura Phenomenon---
Taichian Physics. A type of observational problem that occurs within specific, stable situations. The observer looks, but the unseen subject has its Still Unseen Attribute fixed, which reflects on the physical world. Frequently, a drastic change in the situation causes this attribute to be lost.
CCC3019A

The explanation is overcomplicated and doesn't appear to make much sense on its face. What would constitute a 'stable' situation? What the hell's a Still Unseen Attribute? How does that reflect on the physical world? Drastic changes like what?

Examined in the light of this theory, its meaning is far easier to discern.

A *stable situation*, in the light of the MWI-style Chuuni/Denpa madness is exactly what we have here: it's the kind of psuedo-determinism that stems from a world with little, if any, variation within it from a day to the next, a week to the next, a year to the next. Events happen with routine, because that's life in Gunjou.

The *Still Unseen Attribute* is a meta-reference; the specific term is usually seen when Taichi starts discussing character's archetype characteristics. He describes Modern Tsundere archetype Touko as *unyielding girl with the Reversible Character Attribute*, for example.

The most evident is in the Rooftop extra scenario, pertaining Misato:

Their vanguard was the Gunjou Institute Broadcast Club President herself, Miyasumi Misato.
She is fairly gentle, however, she is a person of rules,
and a person of glasses, as well.
[...]

She was also a natural airhead.
She has loads of Character Attributes.
While we're on the subject, it can be said that she also had the Beautiful Big Boobs Character Attribute, which Taichi found unbearable in many and varied ways.
CCZROOFTOP

To make the Still Unseen Attribute simply understandable, it's an excessively overengineered way of saying "that thing when you're pointing something at someone and they look and look but can't see it".

As for how this all would reflect on the physical world, this is simple in the pseudo-MWI setting, in fact, it's exactly what I've been pointing out with examples like the bread in the cafeteria: he can't see it, and the *inability* to see is simply transformed into an *impossibility* of doing so; conversely, like much of the Internet, once seen it cannot be unseen.

The shock that brings this change would be, of course, a large change in the setting: were, say, a port to be opened in Kamisaka, Taichi's 98 Game would be affected, though whether it would force him out of his madness, or further into it, it's difficult to tell.

All this brings us back to Misato, which is somewhat problematic since it would require a more complete character analysis which is outside the scope of this chapter, so a cursory examination will have to do. The description seen above speaks of a *natural airhead* attribute; whether it's troll or an older revision[cxiv], even a superficial examination of Misato reveals that this is not so.

What Misato has a tendency of doing is *pretending not to see*; Taichi's perverted behavior, in particular, is either ignored or quickly forgiven, although she's not impartial to having her own brand of revenge at times. How she can do this for Taichi, but not her father, similarly to how Taichi could do this for Sakuraba but not Yutaka and Tomoki with Taichi but not her will certainly have to wait; for now, her ability to *pretend not to see* is what's important, as it's ultimately consistent with the Shimura Phenomenon and the pseudo-MWI on examination here.

This double connection, from (pseudo-)science and from Misato's characteristics makes for strong evidence that this is the correct interpretation of the Shimura Phenomenon: it's an intentionally confusing, but not incomprehensible, in-story way of declaring what is happening as being nothing but an observer's error in the sense of it being fundamentally delusional in precisely the way that has been described so far.

...but even with all that, one thing remains yet unclear at this point: *how come Miki can't see Youko but Kiri can?* It's interesting how Kiri appears unable to notice *anything* that is happening, including Taichi putting his hands on her shoulders. Even more so is how Miki as if disappears from the scene shortly after the Shimura Phenomenon explanation. *What happened?*

IV.VI Quantum Marty Stu Kurosu Taichi

What we've seen in this lengthy chapter is how Taichi builds his own Settei up. Explanations for events are *refined* into mysteries, then solved inside it as his memories are edited, leaking into each other and into the world via hallucinations; it's his desire to return to a time of happiness that, Automatically and beyond his conscious control, constructs a fictional world where his desire for an endless repeating and *predictable* happiness could be conceivably achieved, over and over and over *with the same means*.

What he wants is naturally impossible.

What he *does* build is a fictional world, however, which is sort of what he wanted and what was the initial hypothesis. It's a world very much videogame-like, which is meta in a sense; on that subject, no examination of the *videogameness* of Taichi's 98 Game could be complete without simply listing out the unbelievable amount of quirky, stereotyped, clichéd and troped characteristics seen within himself.

If nothing else had, this non-exhaustive list alone should have triggered more than a flag in the reader:

- Orphaned shortly after birth;

- Abnormal hair color;
- Abnormal eye pattern;
- Ability to switch eyes to see at night;
- Ability to switch himself and others through parallel universes;
- Perfect memory recall (alleged);
- Highly cultured and well read (alleged);
- Sesquipedalian Loquaciousness;
- Made to dress as a girl for part of his early age;
- Sexually abused later on (alleged);
- Became a highly skilled killer and an expert trapmaker with a single week of training;
- Mastery of Karade, the (imaginary) Super Martial Art;
- In general, a Mysterious Past;
- Has the highest Conformity Coefficient perhaps of all Gunjou;
- Has a beautiful childhood friend slash girlfriend who only wants him;
- Has a beautiful young neighbor who is quite smitten with him;
- Generally popular with girls, despite it all;
- Popular with the boys too, to his chagrin;
- High levels of perversion;
- Affectations of writer;
- Plans to become some kind of hard-boiled private eye;
- A cute weakness to blood;
- A cute reluctance when directly sexually pressured;
- Promotional goods including a doll, a bag, and (apocryphally) a fan club[cxv];
- One of the last survivors in a world where mankind has vanished;
- Specifically one of the few *male* survivors;
- And where a time loop keeps resetting everything;
- Memory loss of suspicious intentionality, including said time loop;
- Carryall bag full of every sort of random crap like an adventure game protagonist;
- Is ultimately So Very Evil and So Very Dark and So Very Misunderstood that he has to live alone forever and ever oh how it crawleth in my skin, why doth these woundth not giveth the appearance of healing? -eth?

...and going by the coloring of the pubic hair in the sex scenes, which is better visible in the Reprint Edition files[cxvi], his actual hair color would be a very animesque *blue*[cxvii].

Miki: "Wah! Balance, mister, balance!"
CCZDXC

This isn't the list of characteristics of a protagonist, it's the characteristics of a borderline Marty Stu. The amount is absurd, and intentionally so: many of these are either not real or not quite as credible as they seem to be, and that last one especially will need very careful examination.

That's because most of these are of Taichi's own design and exist only in his mind, in his delusional attempt to be more like a "protagonist". Or, as the Deus Ex Chaos scenario put it, *all kinds of protagonists*, thanks to Quantum Science.

Being an additional scenario released a fair bit before the actual game, that scene is intended as a simple meta-joke on how it (and the first week in general, the only part included in the trial) imitate many other VNs; after all, just reading the first week, there's little material to believe that Cross Channel would be more than an overwrought but fairly straightforwards eroge.

The first layer of trolling is reading the scene after reading the scenario as *still* a fairly straightforwards story; but reading this as *literally* what the protagonist is doing, this reveals a characterization that is ordinarily invisible: Taichi is striving to be a Hero, a Protagonist of a tale. This striving easily supports the fundamental theory, even if much remains to be seen whether many of the events demand an unsatisfying if supported dismissal as *hallucination*.

This striving, however, isn't necessarily a good thing: he believes himself, however accurately, a monster that merely dresses up as a human, meaning that this striving may be just him doing exactly that. And yet, when he describes his concept of hero, which he more or less rightfully believes generalized:

In the general sense of values it's the lone hero
that is beloved, more than the thousand of armies
and their splendor.
Hero: a single solitary Absolute.
That is what people wish for.
It's no more than what they want taking a shape
with the name of Aspiration.
CCC3025

...as well as his goal:

But I got no aim except to be a being loved by everyone, like the hero of a tale, nothing else!
CCC3018

...he betrays a longing, if not for normalcy, certainly for *acceptance*. There have already been hints above that while Taichi may not exactly be a saint, he is far from being the monster he keeps claiming he is.

And as we move to examine the rest of the cast, the evidence that they are playing a similar game of *pretend desolation* to Taichi's will be only the beginning of the similarities

Many of them are as broken as Taichi is, perhaps even more so, and in similar senses to him – even characters that are supposedly perfectly fine according to the Conformity Coefficient. Leading therefore to the questions: *could Taichi's score be so high simply because he cheats on the test in order to assuage this self-belief?* And if everybody's broken, is anybody broken?

That last will be the question that begins to lead into the final one: the *why* this is all written, and written like this specifically.

V Friends to Grow a Heart With

There are seven other characters with Taichi in the Cross World, although there's more that have a direct or indirect impact on Taichi and that have received direct or indirect impact from him. There's much to analyze on the

subject, therefore, first and foremost how *all* of these characters have good reasons to be playing along to Taichi's delusions, intentionally or unintentionally, beginning from the pretension or assumption that there's no one around them.

There's three ways the story is written in order to deceive the player:

- Taichi is known to hallucinate sights and sounds; although not always in a manner that's intellectually satisfying, at times this will necessarily be employed.
- All characters have or believe they have a philosophical and/or physical distance to other people, which gets "conveniently" never questioned in detailed precision, allowing both Taichi and the reader to draw incorrect and misleading conclusions;
- Some characters just play along with Taichi or are purely his delusion.

That last one shouldn't surprise: after all, the reading key for interacting with people at Gunjou is given by Taichi himself.

Taichi: "If you contact the other party while conforming to their rules, you can construct conversations."
Kiri: "...how do you learn... these rules..."
Taichi: "Powers of observation are needed. Right, then... for example."
CCC3007

This borderline autistic girl then described is all but a reading key for most of this theory; whereas she is maybe lost on an ocean of numbers and ignores all but what's outside a radius of 30cm, Taichi may simple be lost in an ocean of words:

I stretch my hand out from the ocean of words that had managed to undo the connection with sentences.
CCX0001

...and be ignoring all that happens outside of a radius of seven other people, or at least those who at some level accept that he is living in a world that runs roughly *seven* times faster than that of others.

V.I Fallen Angel: Miyasumi Misato

Misato's archetype is that of the prim, proper, somewhat-matronly Older Sister; she has glasses, large breasts, and expectations of order and rule-following, as well as of people getting along together; despite this, she's at least apparently fairly ditzy and airheaded. Like this:

Misato: "There was no tea, so I poured water in cups and here I aaam!"
CCC3004

The simple twist visible here is that she follows rules in apparently haphazard ways, letting some go, rigidly following others, superficially constructing their shape at other times: she absolutely cannot stop herself from serving tea, she has none, so she does everything but the part that's missing... which just happens to be the one that matters.

It's correct in form, but utterly pointless in substance.

When the rules she wants followed aren't, she grows distant, ignores all but a task she sets on, disregards correct sleep cycles, refuses social contact and help, and is prone to generally hurting herself, in the past by slitting her wrists, nowadays by getting drunk and being accident-prone due to ignoring all but what's directly in front of her - or rather, what she thinks *should* be directly in front of her.

Although the following *appears* haphazard, it's not quite so. For some people, she shows near-total willingness to disregard rules; she at least feigns ignorance at Taichi's sexual jokes and advances, but given the reprisals that at times come right afterwards, it's easy to see that she's well aware of what they are far more often than it seems. She not only disregards but also bends the rules for him: what kind of strings she managed to pull to get "84%" Kurosu Taichi to join her club is never explained, though not difficult to imagine[cxviii].

And yet when it came to her father she could not let his behavior go, despite how her parents divorced over her, as her father fought for her to not be "tossed away", whether literally or metaphorically. This is not clear-cut, of course, as what her father did was still a crime; but the idea that some

things can be a crime and still demand forgiveness will certainly need to be kept in mind, philosophically speaking.

In all this, her brother Tomoki isn't capable of dealing with her betrayal, but like she can ignore Taichi but not her father, Tomoki can shrug off Taichi's behavior while not doing so with his sister.

The first key to reading Misato is therefore her *flight*: she desires escape from having to make decisions, or even from feeling anything. Noticing hurts, while diving herself into *doing* avoids having to deal with reality. The second key is her *regret*: she desires to make amends for her behavior, punishment for it, or as most other characters from Taichi onwards, to take back what she has done.

V.I.I What's in a Name?

Misato's name is well consistent with the Shimura phenomenon, as mentioned earlier, but one little mystery remains unsolved: while she has no problem being addressed as Mimi, she has a problem if addressed as *Mimimi*.

The name Mimimi is given as written 美々美 (beauty, kanji repetition, beauty[cxix]) in both the main story and Another Story. Although WWWJDIC only reports Mimimi as reading, Bibibi/Vivivi is an alternative pronunciation - just one, due to how the two are pronounced substantially the same in Japanese[cxx].

The first theory is early draft leftover. Originally, Misato's name was 美里 *beauty* and village. This made her share a kanji with Miki, written 美希 (beauty, uncommon). Her name is still spelled like this in the fairly early Deus Ex Chaos Trial Edition scene, which is why it's otherwise misspelled as Mizato in the translation.

There's one single leftover in the original VN as well: the Week 2 scripts for the Week 1 Misato route, like most of the copy-pasted scripts, are an obvious older revision; during the infirmary scene, when the text is blocked

by asterisks, in a sentence that only has the first kanji of her name that kanji is 美.

It was therefore changed very late in production, and the change was made with little more than a global search-replace, which is why the error was not caught in the less-revised Week 2 scripts[cxxi]. The reason for this change is uncertain, but there's several simple hypothesis. First, in how her name is written: **Mi**yasu**mi** **Mi**sato. That third Mi would be the one written with the kanji for beauty, and since those are the two closest, the idea that *mimi* comes from there is easy to think.

However, Mimi as written reads like a bad pun on her first name, and that's the first problem, but it also clashes with the idea above of the two closest 'mi' being her accepted nickname. If this is the reason, then the reason has simply been excised.

There's another reason, however: more numerology. Mi, as already suggested, can be read *three*. Mimimi, therefore is 3-3-3. That's half of 666, the 'canonical' Number of the Beast, and with all the things related to sin, punishment and evil there are just in her route, Taichi telling her she's halfway to Satan would obviously annoy her. And if it's pronounced VI-VI-VI, that's not even unsubtle.

...all despite how her nickname for Taichi means essentially “big giant failure”, even if the more or less seriously intended meaning is all but, making her more a bit of a hypocrite[cxxii].

V.I.II Misato's Approach: Ignoring the Fall

Misato's approach to the Fall of Mankind is simple: she ignores it entirely.

Misato: "But we cannot put mascara on the pig of it being well past opening time..."
With both hands she shook something I can't see with a shaka, shaka.
Senpai, those are maracas.
CCA0006

This is the first time that she contradicts the disappearance of everyone, with the implication that classes would've started on this Monday. The term is generic enough that she might mean the opening ceremony, rather than strictly classes, but it's odd she doesn't reference it explicitly. The answer may actually be shortly afterwards:

I didn't notice because the bell didn't ring.
CCA0006

There's opening ceremony, that's why the bell didn't ring. Opening ceremony is only a half-day, so there's currently no classes. But this thing about *not hearing the bell* relates closely, as it isn't the only time there's a sound oddity with regards to the bell around Misato right in the first week:

Bom *Bem* *Bam* *Bom*
Bom *Bem* *Bam* *Bom*
CCC0021

The sound effect heard is simply that of Misato hammering away; but the text itself is a fairly accurate rendition of the Chimes of Big Ben, which is the typical Japanese school bell. Although 7:30 or thereabouts is a little early for first bell, it's possible that the bell *does* sound, but just like in the Hollywood classic *The Great Escape*, the sound of hammering covers it up.

This discrepancy between sound and text could hint that the hammering should have originally been loud and synchronized enough to cover it up precisely[cxxiii]. At the very least, it offers an easy out that doesn't require resorting to Taichi simply pretending the sound doesn't exist, as he would be doing throughout many parts of the story.

As often happens, the *presence* of this ambiguity is as important, perhaps more, than the rest.

This ambiguity continues with Misato herself, this being first week. Is she pretending everyone is there and therefore classes would be in session because she is ignoring reality in her flight, or because everybody is *actually* there and she is just ignoring them, still in her flight?

In the second week, Taichi will pick up and comment on this behavior of hers:

In the proper course of soundness of her mind,
there was a derailment.
She is not accepting this.
This reality of the absence of people.
CCB0005

Whether it's her that's refusing the absence of people or Taichi believing no one's there is of course ambiguous, even more so given there's a simple third possibility: that Misato is pretending she's not isolating herself with her flight.

But in the first week scene, Taichi never points this out, rather he turns things into a bad joke. Maybe it's because he knows everyone is there as well, as that part of the Settei isn't fixed yet; but if it is, there's actually a reason for why he'd ignore that anyway: he is being subjected to short-term memory reset due to sexual stimulation, given Misato shaking her hands as if holding maracas would definitely make her breasts sway as well. In the second week, instead, he was straightened up from having seen her panties.

More ambiguity is dropped off in another apparent throwaway line:

Taichi: "Delicious!"
Taichi: "You're really skilled at this Senpai!"
Misato: "Am I now? But I only really started to cook recently..."
CCA0024

That may be because everyone has vanished not four days before... or it may be because his father had gone to jail not four months before, and now has to prepare food for herself. Remember that she says her house is stocked with food, and that can't have happened in the last two days.

In the fifth week rooftop scene, when she should be discussing the absence of mankind, she instead very conspicuously doesn't:

Misato: "Right then. If nothing goes wrong, because us being here..."
Misato: "But because of that human death, there is nothing that could be done... ah, apologies!"
CCD0008E

This disappearance of people sounds like normal, but it soon becomes evident that Misato is talking *only* about how the death of Yutaka put the rooftop off-limits.

The only time she appears to state the absence of people is in Sendback:

Taichi: "You will have opposition to the way I'm saying this, but to accept your sinful self, should you not be necessarily working on some kind of plan of action?"
Misato: "That is... impossible."
Misato: "It is absolutely impossible, now."
Taichi: "Why!"
Misato: "Because... there are no people."
CCD1001B

But the topic of discussion is *her family and how to put things back in order*: although translation requires being fairly generic for it not to sound overly strange, that “there are no people” would be satisfied by her mother having abandoned her, her father being in jail, and her brother being in a fight with her. It is still ambiguous as to whether humanity is gone according to her.

And finally, there's the ambiguity of *what* exactly she is doing. She's sending an SOS via the antenna, certainly: but whether she intends to use the antenna to send the SOS signal, or whether it's just an ambiguously worded way of saying that putting together the antenna is just her way to send an SOS to the world is not so clear.

This indifference to the Fall, and all related to it, is naturally not immediately conclusive. The end of all people could be only one of the great many things Misato is ignoring and setting aside, which much like the

tools on the stepladder, will eventually only collapse on top of her and, perhaps, on top of anyone foolish enough to be close to her.

It remains that there's enough ambiguity for this theory to be very viable with Misato, more so considering the Shimura Phenomenon is an adequate if complicated description of what she would be doing.

V.I.III Misato's Route: Cross Channel

Though all routes but Miki's are accessible by the third loop, the sequence of routes is in the end fairly strict, and it follows what is much more than an arbitrary sequence. It's logical, then, that considering the first route in which a character is winnable as "theirs" ought be the most interesting study.

The first route is a very big deception played on the reader, the first of many, and one that plays off of the reader's expectations, preconceptions and lack of careful reading in equal measure. Nothing is said of the disappearance of mankind, yet no one but the eight are seen; Nanaka is there, but the first scene in which she appears is explicitly a dream. Nothing is said about people being unstable, yet no one acts in ways that could be described sane outside of a Visual Novel; the flashbacks are never announced, yet there is an appearance and a disappearance of the sound of cicadas that makes no sense.

And yet, as said right in the major reading keys, the greatest trick of the route is that there's no trick: all those things may simply be in the process of being Fixed by Taichi. This route, therefore, would cheat readers twice: first, by playing on readers' expectations of a VN who will erroneously fill in the blank of the parts of the story conveniently left unsaid; later, by playing on those readers who think themselves clever by having concluded that simply because the first week was dishonest in certain ways, that the rest would not be so in similar ways.

While this route appears to be the most dishonest, as the flashbacks are never declared and the disappearance of mankind never mentioned, if the theory is correct it's actually the most honest: mankind really is just offscreen, and Taichi himself has difficulty telling the past from the present anyway.

This is the great paradox of Cross Channel, that a great truth would be revealed through a great lie that already apparently revealed a great truth.

The first week doesn't just deceive via events, but also via register. The first week is the one most filled with complicated grammar and high-tone writing to the point of sheer near-incomprehensible ambiguity - all in what appears to be a high school romance adventure about the people in a club, which is something more in line with typical, average, run-of-the-mill dime-a-dozen Visual Novels.

Reading closer and with the benefit of hindsight, this register is of course not self-serving pretty language. There is plenty to examine that makes sense underneath it all; as he himself will say at the end of the story, this is the *muddy water* used to cover up the sewage underneath.

And even that, I'll show, is not quite honest: as what's below this gushing of incomprehensible overwrought pseudo-nihilist garbage is perhaps a greater understanding of his situation and of his ultimate goal than Taichi will ever consciously have, it's more like the exact opposite. As understanding e.g. the big diary writing midway through the first week requires having gone through the whole of the basic examination of the story, that kind of things will have to wait for the script commentary.

For now, there's one further use that may not immediately be apparent: setting up tone shift jokes. For example:

Taichi: "Senpaaai!"
I called out to her, and the black hair that the cradling wind had made so membranous twisted about grandiosely.
Turning this way,
the strong wind made her glossy long hair as if a raging stream.
With difficulty, Misato-senpai parted the flow of her hair with a hand, so her face would peek out.
Misato: "..."
An expression of engrossment clings to her face, under the sunlight already growing in strength.

The date of Summer's lease is coming to an end,
and therefore I know how that would melt off in an instant.
Misato: "......?"
Her plump reddening lips begin to part as words begin to be formed.
A whiff, and what near the ears would have been a shout was erased by a gust of wind into but a murmur.
CCA0006

Between impossible coincidences concerning the wind, and the absurd comparison between a pretentious term for the end of Summer (here adapted with some Shakespeare) and her smile, this is far further into the purple than it has any reason to be. And at the end of all that:

Taichi: "I can see your pantieees!"
CCA0006

This line would not be anywhere near as effective in demonstrating Taichi's attempt - and failure - at coating his sexual perversions in fairly irrelevant high-register vocabulary without that setup.

And yet, in this purplish prose and this silly punchline, there is already much that can be seen of what lies underneath. The language itself, as said, serves as a hint at Taichi's behavior: be it ridiculous on its face (and perhaps more than a little intended as criticism against those who use this kind of language straight), this sequence has a justification in story.

Even in the details themselves there is a wealth of information to be found: the wind and more importantly the *coincidence* will be seen more later on, but this sense of engrossment on Misato's face when taken more or less unaware suggests that she was lost in her own flight, and the fading into a smile in artificial and mechanical ways (the comparison is to a time-lapse film) suggests its artificiality, a behavior she will say she saw in Taichi.

The scene in general is interesting as a showcase of Taichi losing himself in his own world, as he does so long enough for Misato to notice something is wrong no less than *twice*. The second time, Taichi doesn't even notice Misato has come right up to his face. This continues consistency with Taichi

sometimes just diving into his own mind, oblivious to what goes on, and given the Intracranial Photoshop scene, very possibly to invent visuals based on previous material.

There are also hints and suggestions of events and characterizations that are certain to go over the head of first-time readers, such as how Taichi describes Misato as 'sinful' (or at least her thighs) as well as this false choice[cxxiv] after Misato's hideous Mascara/Maracas pun:

- Straight-man response
- Knock her down
- Make her atone

CCA0006

Whether Taichi already if unconsciously understands that something weighs down Misato[cxxv] or a touch of meta is not simple to tell. Generally, Taichi is *not* a very good judge of people, starting with himself; but that's limited at the conscious.

Regardless, for all the purple, it's hard to shake the idea that there is a certain *fondness* for this person in Taichi's mind, and for that, the contrast with Kiri is interesting. We've seen hints of the linguistic problems he has with her with the Karate thing, but it's the intentionally cringe-inducing *kiri-fuda* pun alone shows the contrast with his respect for Misato and his ultimate (if perhaps unconscious) disrespect for Kiri.

In a more straightforwards example of apparent overwrought, the first week contains the single longest line of the VN in both English and Japanese, a monstrosity that required three whole pages to be displayed in the original version[cxxvi]. It's a run-on sentence that appear to mean little more than his understanding that even having filthy thoughts about little Yusa is a very bad thing to have.

And yet, for someone like Taichi, who believes himself a monster, the concept that he dislikes that his thoughts so much as *sway* between wanting to have filthy thoughts or not about her is very important, especially in the light of what he would do to Yusa in a time after this flashback.

The point remains that it has meaning *despite* how it is ridiculously overwrought, rather than *because* of it or – worse – having no meaning at all outside the hollow fake "beauty"of the linguistic exercise.

Outside of the way it's written, there's the way it ends: with an apparent reassembly of the Club, with everything going off more or less well, considering who it is, and one of the most unambiguously upbeat and happy scenes of the story. This scene is never repeated, not even in future replays of the same route; perhaps it was coincidence, perhaps it was fate: what's certain is that no matter how much the same pattern is repeated, this result *never* comes again.

This is among the most important themes that run throughout Cross Channel. It's not a simple rejection of cause and effect, but an understanding that merely going through the motions is unlikely to result in specific events, which is criticism that applies to Misato as well as Taichi.

Even a world of just eight people is too complex for one person to wholly dominate: this lesson will come to a head in the Miki route.

V.I.IV Gravure Idol Rie Miyasumi?

A minor oddity in one of the lines in the scene of Misato's introduction quickly spirals into something possibly very important:

I called out to her, and the **black hair** that the cradling wind had made so membranous twisted about grandiosely.
CCA0006

Pretentiousness of the coincidence aside, her hair is obviously *not* black. This might just be a discrepancy between graphics and text, one of many; yet as we've seen at the start, Taichi seems to have some sort of issue remembering the color of hair. And for being a possible minor mistake, this is repeated:

A jet-black cape that swims in heavens tinted ultramarine.
CCB0005

Once is a coincidence or error, two is worth investigating. Further oddities in the apparently innocuous humorous scene just shortly afterwards suggest at least a very curious coincidence.

It's quite old, but here's a nude photobook of an Idol who got sort of famous for having dated a sumo wrestler, extreme weight loss, and some standout issues with her mother. Amen!
CCA0006

The idol was difficult to place, but thanks to a certain website (Japanese only) , the answer is found: this idol is Rie Miyazawa , and for what seems like a completely random reference, it's instead fairly relevant. While a sumo wrestler and weight loss don't seem part of Misato's character [cxxvii] , standout issues with her mother very much are.

The Wikipedia article brings much more of interest:

> In September 1994 she cut her wrists with a broken glass in what she described as an "accident"
> - *Wikipedia, see above*

Slicing her wrists in possibly failed suicide attempts is of Misato; she stopped this, but only because her activities themselves bring the kind of hurt she desires. Her hands as she works on the antenna, for example, are full of scratches – and who knows where else she got hurt, given the difficulties of the work. She falls off the ladder and on her butt at least once that's seen, to say nothing of the fall of the tools.

Her borderline suicidal behavior well meshes with her inattention and desire to ignore all but what is part of her flight from reality, which is what lands her in the infirmary pretty much every week. And if the loop is taken as lateral, that means she hurts herself more or less seriously *on a daily basis*.

Idol Rie shares further things with Misato: a kanji of her last name (宮 *miya* palace), first of all; as the reference her seminal Santa Fe album says, it

indeed includes one picture that has her in a pose plausibly similar to Misato's in that scene [cxxviii] ; and most relevant for the start of this paragraph, *she has black hair* .

This leads all the way back not just to Taichi's confusion about hair, which is a topic nowhere near over, but more importantly to Taichi's conflation of reality with fantasy or, rather, of his memories with his reality. In this case, one of the photobooks he possibly even owns, given his collection and all.

But here we come back to that thing about plot hole and Taichi's meta being hard to distinguish: of course it's perfectly possible that there was some miscommunication or coloring issue, what with Taichi looking nothing like he's described for example, but with the hair color issues being something of his and the whole Gravure Idol thing, it ends up reading as entirely intentional

Whether it was or not, in the end, *does it matter?*

Continuing the thought of this apparent joke: if he has an intracranial Photoshop, then he plausibly has an intracranial Premiere, which allows him to create and edit videos. This is less of a joke considering the contamination of his memory leak; in fact, if the theory is correct and there's no time loop, then Misato's jumps from the rooftop would be nothing but his hallucinations.

And if he can create nude pictures of his friends, creation of VN-inspired sex scenes with his friends is also far from unimaginable.

V.I.V Taichi's Angel

The relationship between Taichi and Misato is not a particularly complex one, considering. When Taichi was brooding and alone shortly after being sentenced to Gunjou, she approached him and insistently called out to him. The precise reason is never given explicitly, but the simplest suspicion is that she fell for him, at some level. She's certainly not offering any resistance to sex with him, in fact, it's hard to say whether she came to his house looking for anything else.

Considering the events of her Sendback route, where she desires punishment and takes it from him, it's easy to suspect that at least superficially she believes he will be the one to put an end to her miseries, or at least, that she sort of deserves to hang around someone who at the very least thinks himself a monster.

Misato: "...and the wolf knows my house, damn him."
CCA0011B

What is true and which is self-belief is not simple to tell, especially considering both of them have similar delusions in that direction, Taichi with his belief of being as an insect clothed as a human, and Misato with her wish of being nothing but an automaton.

Another thing they share is a propensity for really transparent lies:

Taichi: "You came and talked to me often on that rooftop."
Misato: "That was because... we just happened to be in the same place..."
CCA0025C

That would be false even taking that she only did that because she is someone who likes to impose her rules on others. There's many examples of horribly bad lies of his, and in fact one comes right afterwards:

Taichi: "Well then... just looking."
Misato: "Just... looking?"
Taichi: "Just looking... at your breasts, Senpai."
CCA0025C

He will do nothing of the sort, and it's absurd that Misato would even think that. But then again, she didn't come to his house with innocent intentions, has she?

Regardless of his inability, perhaps unwillingness perhaps incapacity, of holding himself back when it comes to the sexually perverted, Taichi really idolizes Misato [cxxix] . She is almost like an angel to him:

Her entire face is a smile. It was like, to make a comparison... the Virgin Mary.
Like an apparition of the Virgin Mary.
CCA0016

or

• ˚ • ✻ • ˚ • Angel's † Call • ˚ • ✻ • ˚ • [cxxx]
CCA0025D

Even when he's making up half-crazy stories with an element of truth he's still idolizing her:

Taichi: "Well... I still remember the few words with which you saved me, Senpai, on that school opening ceremony day of the fluttering cherry blossoms, when I had lost sight of all purpose over the death of my little brother[cxxxi]..."
CCA0025B

This strongly contrasts their first meetings, when he dismissed her very harshly. It's hard to imagine his suggestions for her nickname were as jokey as some of his latter behavior, whether they were inevitable given who is or not. Invariably, intent changes action.

There's hints she's treating him like a pet:

Misato: "Let us decide nicknames for each other!"
There was this feeling that the nuance was closer to "pet's name", too.
I am like a pet to her, no mistake.
CCD1001B

and
Misato: "Wait just a little while now. If you move you get a nai-nai!"
CCA0016

The original term is めっ *meh!*, a specific term used to scold small children and animals, well fitting this concept. But is she treating him like this

because she doesn't see him as a human, or because she correctly understands that he doesn't, and is simply accepting and cooperating with this side of him?

For this reason it's not always obvious that her comebacks on his sexual jokes are due to her naïveté or because she's not taking Taichi seriously herself, with the added difficulties of unconscious intentionality *and* that she's obviously matured in the year since, for example, this exchange:

Misato: "Boys, am I right!"
Taichi: "You like them younger, maybe?"
Misato: "Yes, I find younger boys adorable!"
Taichi: "..."
Taichi: "I also like them older ladies, yes."
Sarcasm #2.
Misato: "I do not dislike them, however, older ladies cannot become objects of affections, never."
CCD1001

Is she failing to address his line, as he thinks, or is she cleverly turning him down? If the latter, is she aware of this? And is she even *serious*? And so, whether she suspected he was a murderer (beyond his thinking himself unworthy of human interaction), and if she approached him with the precise intent of putting herself at this risk, are questions worth asking.

It's certainly interesting that among the first thing she did was show him the old self-inflicted wounds, and that near the end of Sendback, Taichi considers this:

...I have to persuade.
Even if it ends up that I have to show her my wound---
CCD1001B

Given that Understanding Without Realizing is so widespread among the characters, with Taichi only being in the lead, I conclude that Misato understands this of him, but doesn't (always) quite realize it. Perhaps, what she's recognizing below it all is that Taichi could help her with her own

problem, and if we accept that there's no Time Loop and no Cross World literally speaking, then Taichi pushing her to recognize her wish to apologize to her father is exactly the help she needed.

And so, when in the ending she says that he doesn't know what this *being a person* thing means, she is correct, but not in the obvious sense; she is simply seeing in him what there also exists in herself, such as the construction of smiles, and that she saw through their reciprocal interaction.

V.I.VI Misato Sendback: Sin and Punishment

The gist of the Sendback route is surprisingly straightforwards at most levels: Misato desires *punishment* for what she has done to her father, and all but recruits Taichi for it. Unfortunately, what Taichi and perhaps Misato (re)learn is that punishment won't fix things.

Although never stated explicitly, the implication is that it's not just the wrong punishment – Taichi has nothing to do with Misato and her family – but punishment *in general* won't fix things. This is visible in the parallel with Yutaka: there, Taichi did indeed have a direct connection with Yutaka, and was part of that, but the punishment he dealt (death by suicide) did not fix things. In fact, it may be something he regrets even more than what he did back at the mansion.

They key to all this is in this passage:

Taichi: "Why do you hold on to your cell phone?"
Misato: "...a mannerism."
Taichi: "You are just waiting for contact, right?"
Taichi: "From your father."
Misato: "...yes."
Taichi: "Let us say a call comes, what will you talk about?"
Taichi: "...how bad embezzlement is, maybe?"
Misato: "You are mistaken!"
I know that.
Misato: "I... I will just...!"
Taichi: "Just what?"
Misato: "I want to apologize... I only want to apologize..."

Taichi: "As in saying you are sorry?"
Misato: "As in saying I am sorry..."
Taichi: "Crime is wrong, very wrong. You did the right thing, Senpai. But you want to apologize?"
CCC1001B

The gist, as said, was simple; the consequences are nothing of the sort. There are two visible thematic consequences from this route.

The first is that there necessarily must exist a law that is greater than the law of humans: Misato's father was in the wrong with the law of Japan, and there's little doubt that by the law of men, what Yutaka did to Taichi did not make him merit much pity in death by suicide.

The second is that this greater law demands not punishment, but something else: the ability to overlook the behavior of people who have committed wrong, or at least, to find some way to let the bygones be just that. This is particularly interesting considering how *everyone*, in Cross Channel, has done at least something that is wrong to someone else in at least some sense.

The exact sense of this *forgiveness* is yet to be seen, but suffice to say that if there is a law greater than that of men, it is unlikely that this forgiveness would be the kind of sterile complete acceptance altogether too often seen in the stories of this modern age.

Certainly, the existence of laws greater than humans hints that the unsubtle jabs at the way government handles things, with its Scarlet Number and its laughably botched containment facility, are very much intentional and play a thematic role in the polemic aspects of the story.

VI.I.VII Sibling Rivalry - Tomoki vs. Misato

The lion's share of Tomoki's role in the story is in his fight with Misato. His role in this connects straight to the point of *punishment versus forgiveness* above: while Tomoki will take a punch from Taichi and shrug his betrayals when it comes to comic book spoilers, him spreading rumors about his relationship status with his sister, or even giving him false coins, even after

calling him *literally* a traitor for some of those things, he will not do the same for his sister with regards to her father.

This is no simple issue to discuss, as the crimes *are* different, even if both are betrayals and both involve people who at least superficially don't show sign of repentance. But the comparison is made, and if the storyline puts them on similar levels then there's no choice but to work from this similarity.

Tomoki's behavior goes well beyond the refusal to forgive her; he simply doesn't give her even the chance to. He refuses to be around her at all, except perhaps when under the pressure of other people. Then again, given the history between Taichi and Sakuraba and the way the former treats the latter, perhaps if staying away was where it ended it may well have been enough.

Instead, Tomoki routinely spies on Misato, repeatedly saving her from the accident she has in routes when Taichi doesn't; he works to sabotage her by destroying the antenna; and then he copies her behavior by taking his own flight into the food procurement "club".

What he is doing is self-contradictory at best, a mirror image of her behavior at worst.

There's plenty more odd behavior from him. There's how he *conveniently* forgets certain details, foremost of all about that one flashback scene in the cafeteria. In it, Yusa's mother feeds Taichi many times the amount of food, much more than he can eat, and shares it with Tomoki. It's obvious he can't eat that much and fairly obvious that he didn't even want it, and he happily shares with Tomoki.

And yet, not a year later:

I submitted myself for it, but I was rejected,
as foodsnatching seems to be strictly forbidden.
Tomoki: "Not a job that can be left to a guy that eats several times what normal people do!"

CCC0011A

This kind of memory lapses should remind of Taichi's very own. A very interesting similarity, but also fairly hypocritical of him - doubly so considering *actual* foodsnatcher Miki may actually be in his "club", at least formally.

His inability to make sharp comebacks is part of his character, but his ability to lie is no better:

Tomoki: "...and I will still be this Overlord's normal friend from now on."
Tomoki: "Because... I don't hate that of you."
He quickly vanishes inside the school building. As if running away.
Taichi: "'Iiii don't haaate that of youuu'... pffft!"
After Tomoki had said that, his face had instantly reddened up to the physical blushing limits of mankind.
Taichi: "If it makes you embarrassed then don'tcha say it! Seriously."
CCA0029

Contrast with the ending of the next route:

Tomoki: "I never even wanted to think of being on good terms with this guy here[cxxxii] either."
CCB0022

Tomoki's respect for Taichi is actually evident from early on:

Tomoki: "...look at you perfectly alright with calling a Kouhai without honorifics."
Taichi: "She's a Kouhai innshe?"
Silence.
Tomoki: "I respect that part of you."
CCA0007

And from the looks of it, what he respects is very much his ability to stay at the center of attention. Of course that's an act of his, but that doesn't make

Taichi unable to at least *do* that. Considering that Tomoki did in fact start not quite liking him:

Tomoki: "...he gives me the creeps, that Kurosu."
CCD0002

...that's some change.

But that's character progression; what cements Tomoki's hypocrisy is the difference in behavior between the way Tomoki deals with Misato's actions towards her father, and how he treats Misato for doing what should have been something much more serious and much more personal.

About a year before the story starts, many months before she told on her father, Misato had caused an unspecified incident that resulted in Tomoki's tendons to be damaged, resulting in the end of any athletic aspirations for him. He is said to be unable to run at all.

Whether she did this on purpose or it was an accident in which Tomoki got involved when trying to save her, similar to the one she has in the story, is something never more than implied. Nothing would change in either case, so even if it was intentional, it was still something born of the Automatism of Misato's and therefore belonging in that inevitable-yet-unwanted domain.

However, despite the test saying he's pretty much normal, Tomoki shows the zeal of someone Automatic when it comes to certain behaviors:

The antenna was being wrecked,
Taichi: "....."
with special attention to the wiring and the machinery.
Thoroughly and completely.
This is not the kind of tear-down made by someone who's passively given in to anger,
it was a precise killing of functionality via rational thought and appropriate tools.
Destruction with composure.
Taichi: "..."

He's not aware of my presence.
The zeal of the assembly of a scale model[cxxxiii] makes one's vigilance towards the surroundings grow lax.
CCC1001B

Automatic and also practiced, further hinting that this may not be his first time doing this and that the time loop doesn't actually exist. And while Misato may take a week because of her well documented intentional pacing, Tomoki may have done this enough times to know exactly how to get this done quickly and thoroughly.

Notice how he is putting particular focus on the wiring and the machinery, which are the parts Misato is known to have difficulty with.

Of further interest how Taichi describes the reason why Tomoki would lose the fistfight right afterwards[cxxxiv]:

With a bomb in his tendon, Tomoki could never win from the very start.
CCD1001B

This *bomb inside* is how Taichi describes his own problem:

A repose with no potential of hurting anyone.
And on the other hand, it meant an impossibility of creating connections with anyone.
No problem, I thought,
because the primary goal was life among 'people', and enjoyment was not taken into consideration.
I was aware that I was holding a bomb within.
CCD1001

If Tomoki's bomb is exactly where Misato hurt him the most, at least according to Taichi, would *his* be as well? And would it have similar origin? If so, the idea he would break down after believing he had his looks insulted, turn into a computer game-like god-style villain, and attempt to fire a *bomb* that could destroy mankind is even more interesting.

And finally, for all his denials, Tomoki *is* more than a little in love with his sister; the ending shows he is resisting animal urges, easier now that he does have a girlfriend. However, this girlfriend isn't exactly an apple from a distant tree:

Girlfriend:『Ah, uhm, tha-, tha-tha-thank you for taking care of Tomoki-kun...!』
CCA0007

This should remind of another girl who is often seen around Misato's routes, both the first and Sendback, and that seems sort of out of place there on first look: Yusa. While the obvious joke is how Taichi is against *pure* lolicon, with the further troll of the undeclared flashbacks making it look like Taichi is two-timing Misato with her, at least, Yusa has several things in common with Misato - starting from the glasses, and continuing with how her insight appears greater than it seems on first look.

VI.I.VIII The Deaths of Tomoki and Misato

If the theory is to make sense, then Tomoki and Misato cannot well die with no time loop to reset them back to life. Indeed there's plenty that's odd in their deaths, although detailed analysis of this will have to wait[cxxxv].

The first oddity is in the way that Misato dies. Sure, it usually takes the death of his brother to spur her to jumping, but the way she does so – and the way it is described – is a near perfect recreation of what should be one of the most traumatic events of Taichi's life: Yutaka taking his life in front of him.

For how much that blood drives him mad, and with how the event should've influenced him, *not a single word* is spent explicitly examining that event and its aftermath. That's partly because it's repressed, and partly because we are seeing the aftermath in pretty much every part of non-flashback Cross Channel.

Misato's suicide(s) will be even more suspicious when considering the events around it, namely the mysterious deaths of the Miki route and the

odd Youko scene right before it. Similarly, the idea of Tomoki dying, by accident and coincidence, on the antenna will also return: like Misato, that may well be how a certain other character has died in Taichi's past.

For now, I hypothesize that their "deaths" are represent Misato walking in on Tomoki destroying the antenna - she does so in her Sendback, and it's suggested Sakuraba does the same - after which they have a big fight, and then they leave both rooftop and Taichi's Settei.

And that's why the pattern of Misato locking herself up at home is never recorded despite it being possible to hypothesize as having happened: Taichi never sees that honestly.

VI.I.VIII Tomoki and the Fall

The last thing to consider is how Tomoki approaches the end of mankind.

Taichi: "But Tomoki, that utterance right there just made you an enemy of every older PC user born after Showa 40, you get me?"
Tomoki: "Nah... I don't think there's annnything to be feared from them now..."
Tomoki: "Besides, we can't take care of every single one of those 100% Old Type cavemen born in paleozoic eras like Shouwa."
[…]
Tomoki: "'cause you know... wouldn't it be better to put the older men in old men communities where they can keep those discussions about Gun**m that they're so good at spiraling on endlessly?"
CCA0019

It *sounds* like he's not scared of those people because they're not anymore, but that doesn't quite sound like the case. What he's doing is something that comes out at times: black humor. He does it again, and that time the tone is even commented upon, in the next route:

Tomoki: "There's still lots of Hot Blooded Koshien-kun out there, you know."
Taichi: "Ah, but among those of us who use words such as 'postmodern', they would not be considered as humans with any observational worth."

CCB2006

We've already seen this part when concerning Taichi's Automatism, and the deceit in the wording is transparent: he's saying there's still people out there, and he's saying he's pretending they don't exist.

The only other hints that there may be no one are his driving and his club. These are not as simple to brush aside; driving involves stealing a car and doing serious damage to others, which *should* result in a lengthy punishment, and the club is apparently pointless in a non-survival situation.

More importantly:

Taichi: "How 'bout a car?"
Tomoki: "...don't got a license... wait, right!"
Taichi: "Hoh hoh hoh, the pigs ain't anymore, Mai Furendo[cxxxvi]!"
In the first place, just up and making a broadcast channel would already be a crime.
Tomoki: "I wanna try driving! But I'm not really familiar with cars 's all."

CCC3018

The first point of notice is that Tomoki claims he doesn't *have* a license. Except, of course, he's at least a year too young to even apply for one. This may be a meta-joke: in eroge, all characters are 18 or older and the simplest way to do this is simply add an arbitrary amount of years to the character's ages, whether that makes sense or not.

This makes even obvious jailbait 14 year old characters into nice legal 18 year olds, and to Hell that they're obviously going to middle school. This is not entirely an uncommon joke, and it was seen in Family Project to remain close by.

The irony is that, if there is no time loop and time is progressing, then Tomoki may well be really past 18 years of age[cxxxvii]!

The second point is that Tomoki never explicitly responds to his jab about the police, leaving just enough leeway that what he may be remembering is

not the absence of people. In fact, the comparison made right after that with the making of a broadcast channel is odd and suspect: there's no way Misato hasn't already gotten permission, by hook or by crook.

She managed to get 84% Taichi into her club, permission for a broadcast channel that was initially wanted by the people (if possibly hypocritically so) until stopped by external events should be a cinch.

There'll be more when going into what, metaphorically, driving represents[cxxxviii]; for now, that Tomoki is capable of it, even with serious difficulties, says something about him as a character. Unfortunately, that he's driving because he knows he won't pay any consequence for it cannot be excluded, and the reason for this may well be the lack of police and school retaliation.

Whether that's because there's no police and school anymore, or simply because he won't get any more than a strong reprimand (like Sakuraba did for running away from the open-air prison for three days) or a suspension (which means essentially nothing), both of which he can ignore, that's not easy to say.

In fact, all of this makes claiming *hallucination* on at least part of this dialogue - and the actual scene where he's *assumed* he's been driving - not that big a push.

The last issue is his hideously PC-named “Life Maintenance and Improvement Club”, which Taichi curiously keeps naming the *peace-keeping corps*. The ostensible goal is to run around town and procure all the food left in people's homes, before the Summer heat spoils it, dividing it among the people.

This of course works whether humanity still exists or not. After all, if the concept of SOS via antenna may ambiguously mean that Misato is sending an SOS via her *construction* of the antenna, then Tomoki doing something similarly puzzling and apparently nonsensical well fits the idea of his club being nothing but a way to get back to Misato.

Since Kamisaka is a dormitory of a town, and is all but uninhabited during the day, food left in there for days is likely to spoil anyway. This won't take long given the Japanese preference for the fresh, and since this is a very wealthy town, it's easy to imagine people would be fairly wasteful on this.

Tomoki doing the rounds and asking for the leftovers would be odd, but no stranger than many of the things that the inhabitants of Gunjou indubitably do.

The results are also odd. Tomoki only ever brings Taichi a single box, around Wednesday night, and doesn't seem to do anything else:

- Miki and Kiri are procuring food on their own, and don't seem to have a stable source at all;
- Sakuraba is busy with his curry bread, and even tells him not to bring him food;
- Youko seems capable of making her own candies [cxxxix] and preserved food;
- Misato has stocks at home, and the one time Tomoki brings her food it's just cafeteria leftovers;
- Touko's death by starvation is all but a running gag.

So what exactly is Tomoki doing outside of grabbing some stuff he might as well have lying around at his house, or be some Tasaki Store leftovers, or be from *her* house for that matter – no need to ask people at all, in short – and giving it to Taichi?

The answer returns to what club is to him: nothing but a means of escape as well as an attempt to attack his own sister.

V.II Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire! Kirihara Touko

Touko's archetype is the Modern Tsundere : she swings wildly between harsh and sweet, maiming the subject of her love for comedic effect. The simple twist is that when Touko gets sweet, she grows incredibly possessive and needy. And if her affections are not returned to the impossible levels she desires, she at the very least hurts herself even severely, in an act of moral blackmail. She also happens to be the daughter of actual martial artists, and carries an actual sword.

The more complex twist is that her Tsundere act is truly an act: to borrow the categorization from TVTrops, she *looks* Type A, tsun with a dere side, but she's closest to Type B, dere with a tsun side. And the tsun is mostly her possessiveness, rather than being “proper” tsun. Problems begin when Taichi thinks and *wants* her to be Type A, and finds himself completely burned.

Another oddity is that while she has technically received martial training, she never uses her fighting skills outside of comedy. She claims she doesn't actually know how to use her sword properly, and since she pulls out the sword in contradiction with the discipline of unsheathe-cut-sheathe of the Iai, that seems to be the case.

More importantly, she is the one character that is almost guaranteed to die in any route *including her own* either by letting herself starve to death, or catching a crossbow bolt for Taichi.

Because of this, her role in the story proper is comparatively minor; much of her presence is best explained in the connections between her and other characters, especially Youko.

V.II.I Touko's Approach: Denying the World

On the wake of her causing injury to this partner, Touko took the infamous National Exam.
And then... sent off to Gunjou.
Just because of that, friends scattered and disappeared.
No contact came, of any kind, any longer. And that made Touko grow increasingly headstrong.
CCX0001

The reason Touko plays along, more or less unwittingly, to Taichi's game is even simpler than Misato's: she's withdrawn in her own little world, a personal Fortress of Solitude where she rejects the people around her, pretending not to see them, figuring them to be nothing but mentally disturbed individuals, imbeciles unworthy of her presence or attention.

There is actually a wealth of quotes that showcase how Touko's behavior would not need to change in the slightest with the absence of all others, making its actual occurrence unneeded for her arc to works:

With a Conformity Coefficient of 46, for Kirihara Touko to live in that midst, defending the remaining 54% is a necessity.
A preservation of self-consciousness maintained through the alienation from others.
In that sense, the selection she made shortly after enrollment was correct.
The Touko of now so resembles herself in those early days.
Affectation, bluffing, conceitedness.
Those were all the words that could be said about the personality that is Kirihara Touko.
CCB0003

She refused conversation. Even with the teachers.
She came to school but refused the uniform, she segregates herself inside and rejects the people.
Belonging nowhere, being nice to no one.
CCC3021

Besides me, no one even wanted to approach or talk to her.
It wasn't because of malice,
it was because at Gunjou there also were those who could not construct conversation, and because Touko herself refused it.
CCD2002

These are the fairly obvious ones, but there's of course much more. And almost as if they were a reading key, the writing tricks get really blatant:

Taichi: "The food was prepared for you by the people at your residence, right?"
Touko: "...yes."
Taichi: "And if they're gone, what will you do?"
Touko: "Nothing whatsoever. Nothing shows up, that's it."
CCD2002

Of course the question *should* be read as "now that everyone is gone", but it literally says *what if*. And she's answering the conditional. Since she believes everyone has abandoned her, or that everyone will eventually because of what she is, she has no difficulties with the question: she believes the disappearance of everyone to be already a done deal.

And yet, for all her haughtiness, she ultimately seems to blame herself for the disappearance of everyone:

Touko: "Next week, let's get our hair cut, both of us."
Touko: "Let's cut them short and be all refreshed. We'll have a healthy life full of smiles."
[...]
Touko: "If we live like that, the number of people will quickly increase."
Touko: "Because everyone will come back."
CCB2016

Her being a wealthy lady, she would of course expect to go to a hairdresser. That she expects them to still exist is therefore implicit enough to be a slip of the tongue, but the concept that *everyone will come back if they live in a certain way* inevitably implies that the disappearance of all was due to something wrong with her, some misbehavior of hers.

She's not entirely wrong, certainly her obsessive behavior towards whoever she hurt at her previous school[cxl] was not something that could go without consequence. Given that she is the one who pushes others away, however, the idea that others would come back if she changes her behavior is not without grounds. And nothing of this requires the physical disappearance of people.

Continuing on this trend, her answers to when Taichi explicitly asks her about the end of mankind:

Taichi: "What do you think annihilated humanity?"
[...]
Touko: "This isn't annihilation, no."
Touko: "...there was no one from the beginning."

Touko: "If I think that, I don't get angry."
Touko: "Or disappointed either."
Taichi: "Was that the same reason you were ignoring me?"
[...]
Touko: "...it was."
Touko: "And still, you came close and talked to me... you're insane. And you know that dammit!"
CCD2002

There is a writing trick at work here: if one accepts Miki's assertion of Parallel World, then *there was no one from the beginning* can easily be interpreted as Touko having somehow figured this out as well. This is fairly unlikely, as Touko never even comes close to those parts of the story.

The real answer is much simpler: this is her philosophy. No one was there, and her previous contacts were the illusions. No one ever existed. It's not a fact, but a construct to aid avoidance of reality. And Taichi's *insistent* approach is what makes him 'exist' in her world, while his refusal to 'melt' into her world and exist for her alone is at the source of much of their friction.

This is even more visible considering this answer comes *only* in her Sendback route, which comes well after the Miki route and the big talk at the end of the Youko route. Her initial answer to this question was different:

Touko: "...they've just thinned out until they were gone."
CCB0015B

This is literally what happened to her: friends deserted her, one by one everyone disappeared.

And with that, this odd line of Taichi's can now be explained:

Taichi: "This world has painted out all people. We alone are... reciprocal."
CCB0015B

There is a very odd and strong emphasis on the word 'reciprocal' in the Japanese, and this is easily understandable given all the above: it's simply a question of mutual perception, and has nothing to do with the actual, physical *presence*.

The one last thing left to consider are her parents. That they might not be gone, along with the staff, was hinted above but it remains their behavior is fairly odd. First, despite being wealthy, they don't resist the State's decision to sentence their daughter to Gunjou at all. Same as for why Touko is not taught how to actually use her sword, despite how she could do the training in-family and to hell with the State.

Perhaps, as with Misato, they simply obey the laws. It's the Japanese thing to do, though of course Cross Channel keeps asking whether that's the *right* thing to do.

But things start being odd when Touko is left to her own devices to the point where she can refuse food, which we see explicitly in the ending (and her "never in Summer" with regards to her appetite is also a hint), and also just up and spend hours at the house of what is supposed to be the most dangerous person in Gunjou - again seen in a flashback, so it's not the disappearance of mankind.

This certainly explains why she can go have a guerrilla training camp out in the mountains, sleeping in tents, and therefore how she can go and spend nights at his house during the story itself, but it remains a fairly odd hands-off approach for a family that is supposedly so strict[cxli].

Taichi said he ran out on being introduced to her parents, but he should be more than a minor celebrity at Gunjou, given how even Kiri heard about him. And once more, despite a scary and wealthy family, none of them appear to act in any way towards Taichi for what happened to Touko, it being largely her fault notwithstanding.

Perhaps the answer is here:

Touko's parents went so far as to move together with their estate[cxlii] for her,
but for some reason their love did not heal her.
Likely, other people were necessary.
Her parents' love was as a matter of course.
CCE0001

Whether a screw-up on their part or something else, the themes of the story require that the love of more-or-less blood relatives to not be enough to grow up a heart, and possibly that's all this means.

V.II.II Touko's Route: Downfall and Purification

Where Misato's route was intentionally overwrought and apparently dishonest, Touko's route has a much more approachable tone but just as apparent honesty. The end of mankind is put front and center, and the flashbacks are all visible as such. Of course, that's not quite the entire story; not just because the end of mankind may be nothing of the sort, but because *what* kind of people should be found inside Gunjou is not exactly stated out loud.

The Touko/Taichi romance reads like the fairly innocent rekindling of an old flame in desperate times, but only vague references are made about how exactly their first romance ended, which is further dishonesty in this sense.

The real twist comes at the end, with the destruction of the antenna, Kiri's secession speech and either the death of Touko and Taichi's suicide, or the murder of Taichi triggering Youko to kill everybody. The reality of those events isn't going to be that simple, naturally.

Even following the Misato route again, and doing all that has been done before again pretty much identically, nothing changes. The *downfall* the route is title after isn't just the end of mankind, not just a reference to the end of Touko and Taichi's first romance, or (in retrospect) Taichi falling for the same stupid idea *again*, but also the apparently irreversible ending of the Club. Functionally identical actions do not bring identical results: this is a refutation of the concept of Loop even before the reader is aware of it.

That irrecoverable bad ending is an impasse from which there is no exit outside of taking Nanaka's advice and going to the hokora. That by itself is an important hint to a fundamental element of the story.

V.II.III Taichi and Touko - What Experiment?

Taichi's beliefs with regards to what happened between him and Touko are colored by the idea of it having been an *experiment* of sorts, which he performed on her:

It was an experiment.
By what extent could the human that I am carry himself through society via the application of good manners?
And depending on the results, I would decide in what way I can live.
Could I blend in?
Could I imitate emotional bonds like sympathy?
What is the possibility of my existence?
And to accomplish all this, an extent of power is necessary to manipulate people at will.
Because I am heterogeneous.
To not cause fright is a must.
To not have my unsightliness perceived is a must.
CCD2002

The absurdity of this is already evident in the description. The very second line all but reads, "*how well can I fit in society by acting as it expects me to?"* It only *sounds* profound. And the final lines reveal the point: *it's all about his looks*.

This will return when considering the other experiments he claims to be running, the one on Yusa (which was not described anywhere near as dramatically) and the one on Miki (which quickly failed – or did it?).

That this idea is silly on its face doesn't change that Taichi truly believes it, of course, but it will mean that the actual events will not have gone the way he thinks they have.

The first point of order is that *he fell for her*. This has indeed little to do with his choices, and more to do with an Automatism which can be traced back all the way to an ~~Oedipus Complex~~ momcon[cxliii], if not a necessarily unhealthy one.

A girl with no one to rely on.
As if fighting with the darkness of her fear.
There we laid, both of us, incapable of crying.
CCX0001

This is the kind of girl that Taichi keeps seeking throughout: separate from all others, distant, aloof. This is where the connection between Youko and Touko begins: Youko was the first aloof girl he ever met.

You who stand above---
CCC0000

This is his nickname for her, and all through his descriptions of her this *solitude* and this *distance* return. Even the way she treated him reminds of Touko:

And I was like that when she... you who stand above looked at me with cold-heartedness in her sight.
No, she wasn't even looking.
Her sight always passed through me as if I simply did not exist, as if there was no interest in me.
CCC3025

Except Touko is being dishonest when she does this, because as said she is closest to dere with affectations of tsun and not viceversa... *but is Youko also dishonest in this ignoring?*

Youko: "I also ostracize syrupples. Same as Taichi."
[...]
Taichi: "Youko-chan."
Youko: "What?"
Taichi: "Love you. How about a kiss?'

Youko: "...Taichi!"
I receive a slimy snakelike embrace.
CCD2002

Short answer: yes, very much yes. She may dislike syrupy sweet couples, but the moment Taichi gives her a transparently fake smile, she melts as bad as Touko does. After all, she *did* pick him; and whether that was Automatic as Taichi says in her Sendback route or not is rather inconsequential, considering how Taichi fell for Youko and Touko as an Automatism in both cases.

This certainly hints at why Touko's name 冬子, despite being more typically pronounced *Fuyuko*[cxliv], is actually pronounced in a way that separates it from Youko by a single letter.

Just like Youko inevitably picked Taichi, so did Touko. She was looking for *precisely* the kind of person Taichi was:

Touko wanted another human someone to discover her own value,
so that someone else would know it, even if Touko didn't.
That is the purpose of her manners, for that encounter.
CCE0001

In short, their meeting was all but fated, in the sense that the fate that expected them was all but inevitable. And so, when he called out to her the conclusion was foregone:

Taichi: "Reeeally... you're always alone aren't you."
CCD2002

Those words are important, because they're very nearly word-for-word the ones Misato used to call him out. Forget Experiment; at best this was him attempting to do to her what Misato did to him. But he made several errors.

Top among them is not realizing that what he loves of people like Youko and Touko[cxlv] is their ability to ignore all that is beneath them, their capacity

to live without little things like love or connections with others; in short, what he loves is something these people *affect but do not have in reality*.

Like Youko is not ignoring but *being excluded* at the Mansion and all her strong exterior is a facade that crumbles the moment she has to actually *do* something she can't take back, Touko isn't the beautiful and perfect picture that he thinks she is:

Taichi: "Come on, paintings should not be talking."
CCB0004C

This combines with how she looked to him right after the accident that ended their relationship:

Touko was discharged from the hospital, and when she returned to school she was...
She was just like before... no, more than before, she had become more thoroughly---
She had become beautiful.
I thought that Touko in her isolated solitude was beautiful.
CCD2002

And that's what he likes them as. And given this is a Visual Novel, it's hard not to conclude that what he likes about people like Touko is what makes them two-dimensional, in her case her having characteristics of a Modern Tsundere. In fact, he all but comes out and says that's the exact point:

In the analysis of Touko's character, the quarrelsome, unyielding spirit that acts as an enormous maximum common denominator for her values had now been forcefully removed from her.
Meaning one part of Touko's personality has died.
Touko became completely realistic. Again.
But me, I like the Touko that is always irritably edgy.
Because that's the most equilibrated.
CCB2007

As soon as Touko is stimulated, she melts; as soon as Youko is treated with more than pretending she doesn't exist, she does the same (in her far less emotional way). Taichi believes that Touko being around him is deteriorative for her personality, and that is far from incorrect despite it being largely *her* problem.

When Touko melts and discards her Tsun act, she grows possessive and psychotic. And even before that, she begins lying. Really poorly as well, such as when she has her maid make a lunchbox to which she contributed the ugly, crooked and disgusting fried eggs:

Touko: "Th-, those... fried eggs, how are they?"
Taichi: "Dunno, these are the only ones that are all crooked... the rest are so square'n'straight though."
Touko: "Ngh..."
I see.
From the reaction guess the truth[cxlvi], and select a suitable conduct.
CCD2002

They haven't had sex yet, and their relationship is already a disaster of cross-purposes and lies. There was never any destination but Downfall.

And so, the suggestions Taichi will have for her would be of difficult understandability to Touko, whether one takes that she's pretending not to understand or actually can't make head or tails of his tsun fetish:

Taichi: "But if you get this sweet, you'll also be far too hackneyed! There's too much dampness! Let's be more consistently unyielding! Select carefully when to show shyness. Someone like that is moe... be that, Kirihara!
[...]
Taichi: "That brilliance surpasses that of a diamond... but alas, a diamond is but carbon, and when thrown in a fire it burns all the way. Goddamn it. The stupidity of storing all the fortune accumulated in a lifetime in something diamond-like I have learned well."
CCB2005

Even interpreted through all this, this is vague and of difficult plausible applicability. His suggestion boils down to wanting her to be Tsun more often, but since that is a facade of hers, that is unlikely to end up well for her.

The very finale leaves this very ambiguous, as while there does seem to be hope for Touko, her recovery is far from assured.

Regardless, there *is* something she has to recover from, and Taichi shoulders the blame for it:

It's true... Touko doesn't have other places to run away to.
And the one who did it... was me.
The way I frolic changed her.
A recompense...?
Or maybe a burden?
Whatever the case, I had the duty to stay with her until the end.
CCB2010

But there's little to prove this is true. His behavior with her, and we'll better see when examining the other “experiment”, was very similar to the way Youko treated him; the difference is that where Taichi was pushed into committing murder, and broken as a result, what Touko did was no different than what she had already done at least once before.

He might have taught her sex, but it was her possessiveness and jealousy that pushed Taichi away. Ironically, Youko is similarly jealous, and the way he calls on her betrays the problem he has with it:

That is when I realized:
no, this is not about rescuing me from emergency at all.
This was about me wanting to be connected with Kiri.
And furthermore... as the most pure myself.
Jealousy.
It's jealousy and no more.
My feelings wilt.
Taichi: "Why are you trying to... degrade yourself?"

Youko: "...but."
Taichi: "'But', again?"
Taichi: "When you're capable of living on your own, damn you!"
Taichi: "When you don't have any need for something like me!"
CCC3022

There it is, in his accusing her of degrading herself and in that idiotic statement that she doesn't need him: it's that erroneous belief that people like Youko or Touko can live on their own in perfect solitude. Little doubt that under that there's also a severely damaged view of his own self that makes him conclude that anyone who loves him must be somehow damaged themselves.

Similarly, that Touko acts as if she could simply not go on without Taichi is, for him, the end of all that is beautiful in her.

An even larger error than even that is the corruption of the correct point, one that is touched upon thematically throughout the story. Touko/Taichi and Youko/Taichi are loves of *improper distances*, nothing more than self-serving greeds that feed on an attempt to establish a closeness that is impossible in reality: that of Alter Egos.

He leans too far to the other side, but ultimately he *does* have some embryo of understanding. And so, the broadcast Touko listens to in the epilogue reveals he might have understood eventually:

Making use of others is no problem. For the sake of living to the fullest, a connecting bond with someone is permissible.
But... assimilation with the partner is impossible.
It is as impossible as it is for you listening to this broadcast to touch me, and viceversa, right now.
However, the frail heart does not want to believe that.
It wants and works towards overlap.
CCE0001

Thinking she could be all-Tsun was just his first mistake with her; the second was his attempt at Formatting the relationship. As the use of the

computer term implies, this videogame-like behavior of his is an unserious, certainly stupid and functionally condescending, attempt at returning their relationship at what was before – and there go the Fixed Patterns once again.

Ironically, it's very similar to what he wishes Youko had done to him:

Taichi: "But I wish you had just cut me off and cast me away right after using me."
Taichi: "Because even then, I would have continued to love you."
CCD5001

...or so he *thinks*. Whether that would've worked, and I must be skeptical, what Youko did in the end was try to take it all back; that's why she took him as her charge, as her goal in life, and 'recovered' him somehow.

In Touko's case the “use” was all in his mind, but if she had become too much for him to handle, the correct behavior would have been to *just dump her*. Brutal, but honest; it's what he does in the Sendback route, however sweetened with one last week(?) together.

Instead of that, he attempted to turn back time, and surprise surprise it doesn't work.

After rushing through the first three stages of grief, Touko then severely hurts herself in a transparent act of moral blackmail; after a trip to the hospital she only apparently goes back to where she was, but in reality still not having gotten over him at all.

And Taichi, fool that he is, now that she's back to the aloofness he liked he's in love once more and keeps poking at her, making everything even more confusing for her.

So we end back at the beginning: *what experiment*? The love story between Touko and Taichi is a mess of lies and cross purposes, of hypocrisy and misunderstandings both of the selves and of the other. It's certainly a

tragedy, if not in the classical sense, but is this a story that sounds even remotely like one person experimenting on another?

And most importantly, would being 'broken' in the way the State claims be in any way a prerequisite to a broken love story like this, given how more or less vicious codependency is not exactly odd to find in human relationships?

The answers are clear. There was no experiment; there were just two very human people who did something very humanly stupid.

V.II.IV The Kiriharas' RV

This was first examined above with Tomoki, but Taichi driving and the reason why it would lack repercussions returns in Touko's routes. When it's time to pick up Touko's bags, their sheer size causes Taichi to use the Kiriharas' RV:

There were about three bike trailer loads,
so we went and used the Kiriharas' huge RV.
But I can drive even this,
because I've studied racing mangas.
CCB2008

Hopefully that last sentences don't sound like a mere joke now, as Taichi truly *does* believe he can understand the world by studying manga/anime/VNs; he sometimes succeeds, as with the cooking, and often fails – sometimes, as with the Formatting, in ways far from the comedic.

The first oddity to consider is with the presence of the RV itself, which leads to a bigger oddity: *why are there cars in Kamisaka at all?* Although the scale is difficult to judge, Taichi lives nearly all the way on the opposite side of town, and yet can get to school in a leisurely half-hour (time scale screw permitting).

In other words, Kamisaka is *tiny* . Tiny enough that the idea of cars should remind of this picture more than anything.

Even more so considering the only paths out of town are the railway station and a muletrack. Even supposing the train line is a motorail , as the Wikipedia article's section on the Japanese motorails says, there were serious restrictions on the size of vehicles carriable.

What is that huge RV for, then, since there's no way they can take it, well, anywhere at all? For that matter, where does the delivery truck that Sakakibara (allegedly) raids for the bread even come from? What is the Tasaki Store's deco truck even *for*, since Tasaki is like at the dead center of the largest crossroad in town, and no one outside of Inner Kamisaka is ever going to go there ever?

Perhaps they made a special train line and all, given how wealthy the town is it's plausible, but if it sounds like fanwanking over a likely plot hole, it may very well be. And it will still find a way of making sense when examining the more allegorical aspects of the setting, when we'll consider Kamisaka as the literal entire world. In fact, this whole thing may just be nothing but part of that allegory, and never intended to make sense outside of that.

While it's hard to justify its presence, a more pressingly relevant oddity is contained in the very first line of that quote: *three bike trailer loads*. Why would he measure them that way, and how? It's suspiciously coincidental that he would then later use a bike to do the same, even if (he claims) just for “several hundred meters”. Which, considering the distance between the Kirihara estate and Taichi's house is measurable that way, continues to be strange.

This actually brings another question: he managed to make three round trips through these steep hills with a bike and a trailer, and at the end he was tired, but still had enough strength to have the whole thing with Touko and the safe just afterwards. This despite his description of using a bike around these hills:

Walking is still fine,
going around these hills with a bike would be much more of a problem.
Bicycles are conceived for flat ground.

This may sound like sidetracking from the point, which should be *why Taichi thinks he can drive with impunity*, but it's nothing of the sort: we're seeing the introduction to the subtle Driving vs. Biking allegory that will lead all the way through to the very deepest layers of Cross Channel.

After all, outside of Taichi, who does this (and also chases Kiri on a bike while remaining effortlessly concealed), there's two more characters known for their biking skills: Sakuraba and Nanaka. Further examinations on this will have to wait[cxlvii], but it's to be kept in mind.

One last oddity in this scene concerns its version in the Touko Sendback. Taichi steals the Headmaster's Ferrari and drives it with Touko. Right after he crashes it, Touko claims he will never drive with him again, as he did in her route right after the RV crash.

And then she gets up back in the RV like nothing. As far as continuity errors, this one is pretty damn visible! And after he crashes *that*, she gets into a car that Taichi had procured the keys to, because he knew he would crash the RV right there, despite the joke about learning cars to Formula Levels, and despite the obvious unlikelihood of him repeating that event so exactly.

These all work much better if the entire driving thing is in his mind, and even if there are allegorical reasons for this, at this level the He's Hallucinating It card needs to be played.

V.II.V The Many Deaths of Kirihara Touko

Despite being a trained martial artist and apparently carrying a sword, Touko's deaths are all but a running gag. The top reason for her deaths is starvation, and this introduces the topic of *proper eating* and what lies behind it.

Although Touko is the most obvious case of improper eating, almost every character has something of the sort: Taichi can barely feed himself without the possessive Youko, Miki is into junk food, Sakuraba overeats curry

bread, Misato is a drunk, and Tomoki's attack towards his sister involves the distribution of food. Only Kiri appears to be more or less handling herself, and she has Miki's diet to deal with.

The allegorical sentiment behind this is made fairly blatant:

When direct contact with people vanishes, people heal the thirst of their hearts via the media.
It's as if they never have a proper meal, and instead put nothing in their mouth but harmful chemical substances.
...a complete distortion.
CCC0011A

It's a rather hypocritical thing for Taichi to say, considering his Fixing of patterns involves videogames, but not necessarily incorrect in the larger themes of the story. Certainly not incorrect for Touko, who rejects all contact like she rejects all food, to the point where Taichi has to literally force-feed her[cxlviii] once, and all but force-feed her multiple times.

Of course, if the theory is correct and there's no time loop, then Touko can't die. And so, there's plenty of oddities concerning her supposed deaths, starting from how Taichi insists on taking a car to where she lives despite it being closer than his own home – and the topic of driving isn't even close to over, given how he gets at least one ride from Youko – to the oddity about Touko's house being apparently so dark that he can't even see it or what's inside.

It would be so easy to explain all this if he had simply never gone there at all.

For now, let's do like good forensic investigators and check the body. First oddity:

The wind gently enters, makes the rounds of the room's interior, then leaves.
This is probably why,
there's no smell of rot.

CCC3021

Why is he intent on giving an explanation when the easiest one is that saprophagy isn't taking place in a world that has eliminated all animals? Simple answer, because he's a scientific idiot and he hasn't figured that part of the Settei out. It's why he checks the bread in the cafeteria for spoiling, but if "there are no animals or insects", then neither is there anything that causes spoiling.

Next oddity:

She probably passed as if sleeping.
[...]
Debilitation? Drugs? Starvation?
I have no idea of what.
Finding out, unthinkable.
CCC3021

He never checks her pulse. He never comes close. He quietly comes in, says maybe a couple of words under his breath, and quietly leaves not long afterwards. Given how Taichi enjoys looking and describing sleeping girls, the lack of mention of the *absence* of her breathing is as conspicuous as the lack of the sign in front of the kouban and the lack of Combat's discarded chain. There is little reason to think she's dead.

Now, in the Miki route, where she's stabbed, it sounds more complex to justify; and indeed it is, as it requires examining Miki and that has to wait. For now, there's this little gem of convenience:

It's as if time itself had been pierced through along with her heart.
Touko seemed exactly as if she had just stopped for a moment.
Pull out that dagger, and she could immediately wake up, and hurl abuse at my ill manners.
CCC4015

That it would be *literally* true should, at this point, not be surprising. Not to jump the gun on the Miki route analysis, but this part should immediately

trigger red flags in a careful reader:

There's bleeding.
Soaking her from the pit of the stomach down to the sheets, it had become a discolored dark red.
CCC4015

The bleeding would be a little abundant for someone who's been dead at least a day, or maybe more, especially since the stabbing would have occurred not hours before[cxlix], but possibly days after her death. That would work perfectly if he were somehow projecting the *last* time he saw Touko actually stabbed, which was when she tried to blackmail him into being alone with her.

More importantly, Taichi is staring at blood to *no reaction whatsoever*. This will be shown to be much more suspicious in the Miki route, when Taichi does that over and over for no immediately apparent reason.

As for Touko's death, whether she is in her own room at home or someplace else – I suspect the infirmary, explaining the odd visual issues – she is simply sleeping[cl]. The reason she was sent there was because of a fainting spell (how *ojou-sama* of her!) due to starvation; and the one who helps her is very likely Tomoki, as seen in the first Tomoki Box scene, the one that gave the name to Taichi's 98 Game.

It's odd he'd only do that on one specific occasion (on a Wednesday night, too), but never on any other route. Both in the Kiri and Miki routes, Touko is seen dead much later than that day, as well.

He may not feed her that we see[cli], but his hypocritical Club certainly fits this behavior.

V.II.VI Does Touko Have a Weapon?

The last strangeness regarding Touko is her apparent superpower: the ability to summon a sword across time and space, as well as generate a thunderstorm on a clear day with it, complete with commentary from

legendary swordsmiths and olden practitioners of a martial art that exists only in Taichi's mind.

And that's where this chapter could end, really.

No need to think too hard to see the sword symbolizes Touko being *really* angry; it's no more real than Nanaka's Comic Force Field (or Nanaka herself), being as it is a manifestation of the extreme Tsun trait of her characterization.

Still, there are two scenes where Touko uses her sword in full view of other people - or at least it *looks* like she does - so they're worth examining closely.

The first scene is right after the Touko sex scene, where she and Taichi head to the cafeteria, Touko says something moe, Taichi stupidly brings the camera to record her, and Sakuraba begins watching the recorded sex scene[clii]. The analysis quickly ends here, as Sakuraba taps out before the sword is brought out:

Suddenly, in the middle of his line, Sakuraba collapsed,
and does not rise.
It's as if his power switch had been toggled.
On looking, Touko's hand is projected towards Sakuraba.
Yet there is no physical contact.
Merely her hand, out-thrust, nothing more.
Taichi: "Via chi?!"
CCB2015

While this sounds like another superpower, Touko is well known to be able to punch Taichi hard enough to make him lose consciousness or close; while her carrying a sword would contradict reality where Taichi's is but a fictional Settei, her being a martial artist competent enough to deal with a lug like Sakuraba is significantly less ridiculous. As for why it looks like chi alone... well, she is capable of Hidden Motion strikes, isn't she? Or more likely, Taichi simply wasn't looking when she punched him.

If she did that at all; Sakuraba was laying on the floor until moments before, having overeaten on curry bread; his return to the living is not odd for him, but considering he'll be found in the infirmary for overeating just on Tuesday of next route while this is already Thursday, it's still sort of odd.

Was he passed out all along, and did Taichi just hit the wrong button? Or did Taichi pass out himself and hallucinate most of this, given how Touko is not angry in the scene right afterwards? Regardless, in this first scene, Sakuraba is out cold well before the sword comes out.

One thing about what happens after Sakuraba is knocked out before moving on. Touko's next act is to perfectly cut the video camera in half, despite her still being untrained and the act itself appearing unlikely[cliii].

Taichi threatening her with a remote control is actually far more sinister just considering what's been seen so far about him selectively seeing and ignoring the world:

I ended up as a multiplex broadcast.
CCX0001

Something to keep in mind when looking at how he threatens Kiri, for example.

The second scene takes place on the rooftop, together with Misato. The only one line of Misato's that hints she's somehow seeing the sword is here:

Taichi: "Come on, stop it with the Harakiri Blade!"
A thunderstooorm?!
Misato: "Kyah, but how, so suddenly?"
Taichi: "That Demon Sword... it has been feasting on people's blood for so many centuries, all because of that malevolent Grudge!"
CCB2019

That "so suddenly" can refer to the thunderstorm; or it can refer to Touko getting really really angry all of a sudden. There is no reference to her sword or to the thunderstorm just that one sentence.

But that's all moot, because Misato isn't wearing her glasses. She's not acknowledging the sword, and what she's actually seeing is anybody's guess regardless.

So whether the sword exists, it is *never* acknowledged by any third party outside of Touko and Taichi, which makes its existence highly suspicious in the context seen in previous chapters.

It remains to see if there are any clues as to what this sword *actually* is, besides the obvious symbolism already mentioned. Perhaps there is:

Harakiri Blade discovered,
brought to the garden,
and broken off.
In its place, I equip a carnation.
Flowers are a symbol of peace, yes.
CCD2002

First, as typical of Taichi, the carnation is a symbol of love , not peace. The larger point is the hippy-style flowers-in-the-gun-barrels, however, and in this, the additional CG for the console versions presents a strangeness: the carnation is as big as the whole of the blade. This can quickly be dismissed as simply part of the super-deformed style, but it does make me wonder if the proportions are not, in fact, all that incorrect.

She did stab herself with something, on that day, and it being little more than a knife would make sense, as well as further strengthen the idea that when he saw her with a blade sticking out of her, he was very much visualizing something he had already seen.

While a sword is conspicuous and would immediately be spotted, a paper cutter-sized knife would be easy to conceal from the authorities. Kiri, Miki and Taichi are said to carry one, although in the former two even that may not be the case.

V.III Little Miss Hypocrite: Sakura Kiri

Kiri's base stereotype is that of the Classic Tsundere . She acts cold and hostile, but just underneath, she at the very least wants the main character. The twist is that part of her personality is actually fairly straightforwards: she is cold and hostile to the world because of a fear of it, out of a betrayed and immature expectation that it would be Correct.

Taichi: "You preached justice to me."
Taichi: "...you see me as someone who can tell right from wrong, who is reasonable."
The tiny gap between her eyebrows grew tighter.
Kiri: "But I did not mean..."
Taichi: "You meant exactly that."
Taichi: "You have a problem with my conduct. You point it out and denounce it. It is absolutely unthinkable for you not to come and fix me."
Taichi: "That ain't a way of thinking you can bandy around at Gunjou ya know."
Taichi: "Whether you're just dumb, or conversely, you very sharply saw through my character I can't tell."
Taichi: "But... it felt like a long time since I've been treated like a human by someone I just met."
CCC3004

This immaturity in her expectation of Correctness is so thorough that she will expect it from everyone, including Taichi, even when she well knows that is not going to happen:

I extend my left hand.
Kiri: "...huh."
Unwillingly and grudgingly, Kiri puts out her right hand and... cannot shake hands.
She withdraws her hand, angry.
Kiri: "......you are making me look stupid!"
Taichi: "I'm telling you, don't just get angry at every single joke!"
CCC3019A

She knows Taichi is a joker. She knows Taichi would not be Correct. Worst of all, Taichi had extended his *left* hand already; and yet, out she comes

with the right hand like a complete idiot. Pure Automatic behavior: this, if anything, is her true Ultramarine. When Taichi says she takes things too seriously, he does have a point.

The bigger twist is that while she is repeatedly said to have a very sharp eye for character, she tends to avoid informing herself, doesn't ask questions, and instead has a tendency to reach hasty conclusions that she then shores up either with misapplied cleverness or a refusal to investigate the details. For example, when Taichi asks *how* he would have gotten Yutaka to jump:

Kiri: "...by picking on Yutaka's legs maybe... there's so many ways!"
Kiri: "I do not think I want to hear specifics."
CCC3024

Yutaka's legs are the last of his problems, he'll happily make fun of them in a way that Taichi just can't do about his hair. He does so right in their first (re)encounter. The only way she can't know this is if she *never asked*.

However, she does imply an important detail: she knows Taichi did *not* push Yutaka down himself; but that Yutaka jumped. She was there and she saw it, and that's why her hate for Taichi is kind of half-assed at times - shouldn't she just shoot him and be done?

This is a good example of Kiri's discerning eye: often correct in the instinct, but wrong in the conclusions due to her lack of knowledge and said immaturity:

Taichi: "More like, Kiri, you've always treated me like I was some murderer, haven't you."
Her face darkens.
Kiri: "...that was... because... there was nothing else I could do..."
Kiri: "Nobody would tell me the truth... I could only think about this by myself."
CCC3027

This leads her to a fundamental hypocrisy, well visible when considering her inane, rambling, contradictory and almost silly rant against Taichi,

which we'll see better in a moment:

Kiri: "And yet there you are, unchanged."
CCC3009

She has a problem with him not changing with the "End of Mankind", but look at *her* behavior:

Taichi: "One of your Companions is dead! Shouldn't another emotion be in you before thirst for revenge?"
Kiri: "That's... th-, that goes without saying..."
CCC4015

She should be in the same EoM situation herself, but she *still* wants Taichi dead over Yutaka: he may not have changed, but *neither has she*.

Because of her relationship with Yutaka and Miki, and of how she's basically the stupidest character that yet 'gets' it who isn't Taichi, she's a tough character to fully understand. And because of her intentionally sanctimonious attitude, a given due to this desire to see everyone act Correct, she is also the easiest character to hate[cliv].

V.III.I Kiri's Approach: Fighting Against the World

Where Misato was in flight and Touko was intentionally rejecting people, it's much more difficult to tell that Kiri is also not living in a world where humanity has disappeared, but merely one of loneliness. She may be the hardest character to.

Kiri: "...so the world came to be like this... where even people are gone..."
Kiri: "In exchange for malice being gone... its density is also gone..."
[...]
Kiri: "You are always searching for game to become a sacrifice for your own benefit. This is clear to me. Up until now, that was something you could suppress. But then the world became like this, the number of persons became insufficient, so your suppression is ineffective."
Kiri: "Because the need for camouflage has vanished."
CCC3009

These are parts of her big j'accuse against Taichi, and there's little fudging here: she's talking about a *decrease in people* that is far more compatible with the disappearance of mankind than with herself simply being abandoned by others.

That's because she's up and talking about *his* reaction to people's disappearance, not playing word games that imply people have vanished from her life.

The difficulty comes in how, while she's not discussing herself here, that is *still* true of her in general. Like Touko, after the test pronounced her a deviant, she was abandoned by all. Unlike Touko, who put up a wall and waited for a Prince to breach it, there are implications that Kiri became aggressive:

Kiri: "We did not hurt anyone, but still everybody hurt us."
Taichi: "And then you went and bared your fangs."
Kiri: "If you are attacked, is it not natural you would protect yourself?"
CCC3007

That's something well compatible with her behavior in Gunjou, for that matter; her first introduction to Taichi was her wandering the corridors (*during class hours*, I remind - maybe her class became "self-study" as well?), righting wrongs such as Taichi trying to flip Miyuki's skirt.

Next is her approach to the missing media:

Kiri: "...but people... there's none anymore."
Kiri: "Television doesn't work. Nor radio. Nor the 'net. Nor telephones."
Kiri: "Nothing but nothing seems to be conveyed... are you saying someone is still alive?"
CCC3012A

Like with Touko, these are not too difficult to read as there being nothing *fulfilling* in the media. She has no one to talk to anyway, as she's been

abandoned by - or having outright *rejected* - all but Miki and the rest of the Broadcast Club.

Much more complex is these words, which are very prophetic if taking the end of mankind literally:

Kiri: "...I think that humans, when they depart, will just vanish like that... because in this world there is nearly nothing."
Kiri: "I am sure, there is Nothing in so much. In just so little is there Anything!"
Kiri: "And we won't know when we will be washed away... I think."
Taichi: "Sort of... an SF-like thing, the Fall of Mankind?"
Kiri: "It is different from that... it is different in how there is a reason in that..."
Kiri: "This will be like waking up from a dream."
Kiri: "If all is quarreling, then everything is scary..."
Kiri: "But one day, all of a sudden everything will be no more... and I keep thinking, what if I was the only one that will be left behind... in that tiny worthless world..."
CCC3007

Is what Kiri prospected now reality, or have these words simply influenced Taichi in the construction of his Settei? If so, is this how she eventually ended up viewing mankind as well?

Does Kiri have something of a Settei of her own?

The answer will have to be seen through actions and context more than perspective tricks in wordplay, actions that include her attempts to murder Taichi and her attempt at secession.

The latter is particularly perplexing from her perspective. While the rest of the people can be said to agree because they are under threat, if everyone is still there, does she expect the guys to no longer show up at school when it's in session? She *is* stupid enough for that to work, the handshake alone suggests it, but that is a stretch by the standards of Cross Channel.

And, like Touko, how is she walking around with that crossbow that *somehow* fits in her skirt pockets with no one complaining[clv]?

There's also more to Kiri than it might seem due to her relationship with Miki. As we'll see, Miki not only is a constant liar, but she is well aware of Taichi's little game and is actively playing into it, and she's involving Kiri as well.

The quick'n'dirty reading key is in the Kiri Sendback route: it's that combination survival game and volleyball where the rules are never given and are difficult to understand anyway, as all that's seen is part of the dialogue among people who are playing by said rules.

That's the same here; we get nothing but their words and acts, that little game as the hint that they *are* playing a game in the first place, and the rest is left to the reader – if they can even guess there is a puzzle to solve there.

If she's at least participating in the game, it's far from unlikely that the secession scene would also be part of this. Perhaps, given Taichi's mental state at those points is less than stable, reality and fiction are sufficiently confused for Taichi that what we're seeing in these scenes is much further from reality than it seems. It would make much more sense if her "secession" involved areas of Gunjou she does not want those few remaining people who she even considers existing to hang around, definitely.

These suspicions are even more grounded considering the many oddities in those scenes. There's Sakuraba claiming he saw Tomoki destroy the tower and punching him, despite acting like nothing was wrong until moments before, or Taichi apparently going through an ending *twice* in the Youko route's bad end.

To say nothing of Miki suddenly screaming about murdering an unspecified "someone", breaking Taichi's spellbound internal monologue, or Taichi completely breaking down and either jumping off the roof from the precise spot known to be weak or attempting to play a comedy scene as he dies.

And most importantly, how Kiri keeps doing this even after Miki resets, suggesting that she has planned this for a long time, well before Summer, at a time when she could have never expected something as bizarre and unbelievable as the disappearance of mankind, let alone to the exclusion of the Club.

While there's plenty to suspect that she's simply alienated herself from a world she can't stand, there is little hard data throughout. Kiri never quite fits the theory as easily as the other characters, and while her necessarily being like them due to context may be a given, there's much to go before there is adequate (if circumstantial) evidence even of that.

V.III.II Kiri and Taichi

Kiri likes to talk big about Taichi being a monster that feeds on people's emotions, that he's a murderer and a psychopath. Her big j'accuse, already mentioned, is wonderful piece of stream-of-consciousness nonsense: he's a monster[clvi], but he doesn't act enough as a monster so he's a hypocrite, and he hasn't changed because humanity is gone, except he's now acting more like a monster so he's changed and he's completely incompatible with humans and a parasite and he's not a human and he's not a monster.

Kiri: "Your eyes are always focused on us, so that you can enjoy the hurting. And it's not something done instantly, you slowly take the time to perform that bullish sexual 'teasing' of yours all the way to the end."
Kiri: "Not a person, nor a monster."
Kiri: "Then who or what are you? You are neither who nor what, that is what you are, just something that ought to have disappeared from the world. That is what I think."
Kiri: "The majority of mankind was so full of malice, but even that had a value far greater than your one life. To me, that is the truth."
CCC3009

And all humans are worse than him and he's a big evil meanie to all the girls. It's caricatured, absurd and idiotic, as well as wide of the mark. Silliest part of all, she is doing this *right to his face* and *all on her own in a world that should be devoid of humans* . She's either stupid, suicidal, or doesn't believe a word she's saying.

If she truly believed the guy would torture and kill people just for kicks, and there's no one around, she should know that he has no reason whatsoever for not taking out the little yapping doggie, wouldn't he? Especially since she *knows* he could wreck her physically with little effort.

This is a hint that she doesn't actually believe any of that, and that while she does have a big problem with him, she is far less secure about her conclusions that she herself wants to believe. Her blurting out this aggressive nonsense is therefore more of a way to convince *herself* than an attempt to wound Taichi, and given how many difficulties she has in finding the courage to shoot him even after the bathroom scene, she often fails in the process.

In this, ironically, she is very much like Taichi.

The idea that she has gone through the events of her route, and what has happened between Taichi's reveal and him forgetting all that he well explains why she would snap at finding evidence of Taichi being a murderer in the Miki route: it would mean that the entire thing about Yutaka was a lie, or at least that it's so in her mind still so easy to convince (and with Taichi still sort of acting like always).

Let's see Taichi's reaction to that. Superficially he's not taking any of that big talk of hers seriously, and that ugly kiri-fuda pun makes things especially surreal. But those are his words: what she says does in fact hit the mark and pretty badly.

He may claim that what Youko did to him was far worse, and it likely was, but that's just him not having a correct scale with which to judge the attack; falling over unconscious after having been called a monster is not the reaction of someone who is sincerely ridiculing those words.

...and if Kiri is capable of doing this to Taichi with those absurdities, what if he actually hit on some points that he is *truly* sensitive to, like his looks?

In that talk, Kiri's incoherent process of self-conviction meets Taichi's depressive self-delusions. Kiri is not *quite* inaccurate in asserting that Taichi is a monster, as that is what Taichi believes himself to be; but like that thing about insanity, it's hard to take him seriously given that it is a self-diagnosis.

As said, he does not remove Kiri, who is simply in his way, and only begins to consider it when she completely snaps in the Miki route, and by that time she is obviously psychotic and clearly dangerous to him. This doesn't make Taichi a saint, but it does continue the issue, because if Kiri is as sharp as Taichi says she is, then there *has* to be some truth underneath her false words.

And I suspect the point is precisely the one seen: *his self-diagnosis.* What Kiri would dislike is his insect-playing-human act, that is, his reveling into the facade.

Let's look at another scene, their first formal meeting. For being a monster, Taichi was nearly crapping his pants:

Kiri: "...I am Sakura Kiri."
Taichi: "I-, I am Kurosu Taichi."
I bow my head in awkward embarrassment.
CCC3004

Taichi sounds honestly *terrified* of Kiri here. He goes so far as (possibly) drinking a cup of raw sugar without any tea in it. He wants Yutaka to help him, as to avoid the "bomb of unpleasantness[clvii]" of the two talking to each other after the Miyuki and Miki incidents they have been through before. *Why?*

The answer may be in the first part of the sex scene:

I'm entering weak-kneed mode.
The cocksure mode I had a short while ago is something I can only hold for a short time![clviii]
CCC3027

Cocksure mode, there it is. Let's keep this in mind.

Despite this initial nervousness, not long into the meeting scene this happens:

Looking over, Yutaka had fallen asleep while still sitting.
Just what I expected, my friend. A VIP you are.
And because of that, it seems we can now talk a little more in depth.
CCC3004

Yutaka falls asleep and he changes entirely: suddenly he's elaborating on the difficulties of interacting with the broken people of Gunjou, and claiming he's no more than someone who's trying his best.

He says that's him trying to deceive her; facts say he's more trying to deceive *himself* about that being a deceit, and he is *actually* trying his best. So when Kiri says she can't accept this, *that* is what she's talking about, and thus, what she actually hates.

In this sense, Kiri's unwillingness to give in to the way he is behaving becomes a positive: although the want to "fix" people is naive at best, it is still born from a desire of helping others. Similarly, for all his issues, he realizes that he can never go anywhere without others near him, although that's a lesson he seems to keep relearning constantly and still won't quite understand until the very end of the story.

This is also a source of mutual attraction; her Automatic want to help him, and his understanding of her rejection of the world for its non-Correctness, which together with her overt hostility makes her fit for his standards.

Taichi: "...well then, Sakura-kun. Carry this doll with you always[clix], day in and day out, that you may clasp it to your bosom for it to be your tiny pal on those tear-filled nights."
CCC3004

The specifics of *why* she's unable to toss it away in that scene are difficult to ascertain as there's too much memory corruption to tell fact from

imagination, but it's telling of what she feels for him that she actually does keep it.

And her feelings for him *have* to be somewhere:

Kiri: "I want to inquire about Yutaka."
Kiri: "I want this made clear... otherwise... I cannot understand what feelings I should have for you."
CCD3003B

If she's offering herself as a more or less joking love slave not a day after learning the truth – if for the n^{th} time – about Yutaka, either there's some really convenient (i.e. bad writing), or that's simply the case.

From this reading, the very way she acts when he rescues (or as we'll see "rescues"[clx]) her from Youko sounds much more like further attempts to convince herself of something she knows is true.

Kiri: "But that's just what you decided to do all on your own, Kurosu-senpai..."
Taichi: "I saved your life, therefore you'll be doing this for me as compensation."
Flat and clear.
Kiri: "...I understand."
Amenable.
Kiri: "Because I do not want to come into debt."
CCC3012A

Interesting she suddenly up and calls him *Kurosu-senpai*, unlike the usual.

This process of self-conviction is also present in Taichi, and is very visible putting what happens after his tale of the Shinkawas in the normal and Sendback routes side by side. In the former, he comes near her and twists the knife of Yutaka's former life; in the latter, he doesn't. He also interposes a little wait, to get everyone to calm down.

But as far as the progress of events goes, nothing changes except Kiri is slightly less angry before Taichi reminds her of Yutaka's memory loss. Taichi working to avoid his Evil Monstrous Devouring of People appears to effect little to no change on Kiri.

But the most striking similarity between the two is in how Taichi *also* understands Kiri well, perhaps better than herself, and yet makes mistakes similar in entity to hers. How she has very sharp eyes he knows, but as seen above, her experience is so little that it's difficult to tell.

And of course Taichi doesn't understand people except obliquely; one odd thing he does is to repeatedly compare her to glass. Yet, when she's struck at, she doesn't shatter - whether by Taichi's attempt at defense, as above, or by Youko.

But put too much pressure on her and she breaks:

Kiri: "Always... bullied... because of those test results..."
[...]
Taichi: "Is that my fault too now..."
Kiri: "That is why... I will... protect my friends!"
CCC4015

This is her beginning to put blame anywhere and everywhere except where it belongs, which is particularly telling since the monster in question would be Coincidence.

This returns to her naivete and difficulty in handling a reality where things don't go as planned, and where things aren't necessarily straightforwards. However, breaking under pressure while not shattering when struck is the *exact opposite* of glass[clxi].

Taichi and Kiri's relationship is a complex crossing of sharp insights that have severe gaps, but in the overlapping of which a fairly precise picture of the two can be seen: Taichi is largely faking his Monster attitude, and it is exactly this faking that Kiri finds intolerable. Her means for combating it

may be incorrect, sanctimonious and very tiresome, but she *is* doing what little she can to help him.

V.III.III Kiri, Yutaka and Taichi

Where the relationship between Kiri and Taichi was complex, it's not even as complex as the one between these three. It's a very important relationship too, as it is very likely at the base of why Taichi still resented Yutaka after all that had happened.

This three-way begins in *how* Taichi and Yutaka remember each other. This was already shown back at the start of the book: their odd reciprocal behavior is a sign of recognition. But if those odd asides are to be taken seriously in those regards, then there is no reason to think the rest is merely a joke.

And so, Taichi's distaste for Yutaka living together with Kiri is entirely serious:

Taichi: "Seriously sorry. It seems I heard a word that sounded like 'niece'."
Shinkawa: "That's what I said las' I checked."
Taichi: "Age?"
Shinkawa: "One year younger than me."
Taichi: "You carrying a picture?"
Shinkawa: "...Kurosu?"
Taichi: "Ahhh, naaah, it's nothing. Forget it."
Taichi: "But still she's gotta be cute even if there's that one thing that's off."
Shinkawa: "Hmmm, well, only the looks then."
Taichi: "Ain't they everything?"
My voice lowered spontaneously.
A specific envy, with jealousy... with hatred.
[...]
Shinkawa: "I'm telling ya this from the start, I don't feel like that about her. So don't look at me with those eyes like I'm some kind of sick creep."
Taichi: "YOU LIE!"
CCA0018B

Being first week, it is still expected to be read as nothing more than comedic, but that specific "envy, jealousy, hatred" is no more random than the anger he had on first meeting him. It's even worse considering that Kiri is a very boyish girl: it will inevitably remind Taichi of himself, a very girlish boy.

And then there's how their family is almost never home, setting up a perfect eroge-style situation. And given that Yutaka is an ex rapist, a *dark nukige* situation. And so, his preexisting resentment towards Yutaka would be further pressed by this idea of Kiri living day after day around this rapist, whom he has little emotional reason to believe wouldn't eventually give in and rape her.

The conclusion that Taichi would want to *free* her from him is easily reached. As for how, the only way he knows: if Yutaka and Kiri were alter egos, like Youko and Taichi, then Taichi has to replace Yutaka entirely.

Shinkawa: "...your dream you say?"
Taichi: "Wanting to completely replace you and getting all kissy-kissy with your niecey-chan, of course."
CCA0018B

Exactly. And so, when Kiri doesn't give up Yutaka once he tells her that the guy was a rapist and is (apparently) believed, Taichi is not quite happy:

Kiri: "My share and Yutaka's."
Yutaka, then.
No matter when no matter where, Kiri would still continue to be that kind of person.
Yutaka. Yutaka. Yutaka.
Yutaka.
CCC3029

This ties back to the point of contention: that Taichi has *not* forgiven Yutaka for his past behavior, not even after all that has happened. Not even in the very finale, given how he starts his public confession with a lie (that there are eight of them alive, with the first problem that Touko is dead).

There is one more very odd thing in all this, namely, Kiri's interactions with Yutaka:

Kiri: "Yutaka, shut up..."
CCC3004

Kiri: "...Yutaka, what did you come here for?"
Shinkawa: "Just giving my greetings as far as it goes. Well... gotta be nice to the people who take care of your relatives."
Kiri: "Unnecessary. Leave."
CCC3004

Kiri: "We're fine so hurry and leave! This is embarrassing!"
Shinkawa: "But I gotta be worried that this ain't going well ain't I? ...yer so unreliable[clxii]..."
Kiri: "This is going well. So go away, we're fine."
CCC3004

These are pretty much the entirety of Kiri and Yutaka's onscreen relationship: *her berating him*. This goes way beyond her archetype, and is difficult to explain outside of her discerning eyes: she might not quite coherently understand that Yutaka *has* been a monster, but she knows instinctively that something has at least *been* wrong with him.

Whether she forgives him for the past transgressions she's already figured out via her intuition isn't explicitly stated, but in her behavior the answer seems to be yes. Her tears on that rooftop flashback are genuine, she buys Taichi's story immediately and without questions, and wants to pay for his share of the blame as well.

And so we get to what, exactly, exacerbated her naive and ultimately love-laced dislike of Taichi into true hatred: she ended up believing Taichi to be the sole guilty party in their feud, when the reality was more complex.

This is all visible in how Kiri flies into Taichi's arms in that flashback, meaning that her having seen the scene of Taichi and Yutaka arguing and

the latter jumping was *not* what drove her to hate Taichi: it was his forcibly kissing her that made her conclude he was to blame.

It is actually possible she's sharp enough to understand Taichi wants her to forget Yutaka, or at least, replace him; but what she lacks is a reasons *why* Taichi would want her to forget Yutaka, and so she jumps to the simplest and stupid conclusion: Taichi is a total monster who killed Yutaka for fun and now wants *her* as well.

This is what being surrounded by malice did to her, after all; what reason *did* she ever have to assume others have anything but malicious intent in their behavior? A logical, but immature and incorrect behavior.

This gets us to another layer of complexity in their relationship: Taichi doesn't know she has seen the argument with Yutaka, she never tells him, and believes that the entirety of her dislike for him was based on his behavior to her in that rooftop flashback.

And so, while she keeps not asking, he is not in a hurry to give her any reason to think he is related to Yutaka's death in any way except maybe as a former good friend of his. His behavior when finding out that she's seen the two of them on that fateful day is one of shocked disbelief:

Kiri: "Yutaka's... murderer."
Taichi: "....."
Taichi: "Fine, I give up."
Taichi: "...what even makes you think that?"
Kiri: "Because I know."
Kiri: "On that day, you were talking to Yutaka on the rooftop."
Taichi: "....."
She had known.
She had known, she had known.
Kiri had known about that.
Taichi: "That day?"
That cannot be.
The heart, in a single go,
freezes entirely.

CCC3023

Why would he panic about this? Why would he be concerned if she knows?

The explanation is in his behavior right afterwards. Now that he's cornered, he offers up not reasons why he would kill Yutaka, but is trying to get her to stop thinking he's killed Yutaka at all - *without* giving her their backstory.

The act he's avoiding tells it all: revealing about Yutaka would certainly hurt Kiri. In fact, this behavior of Taichi's explains a good chunk of the reason why he has this propensity of acting like an ass around Kiri: to give her a convenient target, as the alternative is to have her realize who her beloved brother really was. In this, Taichi's self-criticism and his underlying care for Kiri mix perfectly.

But as with Touko, beating around the bush is not going to work, and his relationship with Kiri will never go back to what it was before Yutaka's death; therefore, Kiri *needs* to be disillusioned, she *needs* to somehow understand that while her insight is sharp, her vision of the world is immature.

In this, Taichi's want to somehow break her is far from being the wrong idea. The issue to him is that the way he approaches it is equally immature and problematically Automatic:

[E]mbrace and it will break,
[...]
don't embrace, and it will grow up dull, dark,
[...]
glass that will become but a clump of earth,
[...]
its beauty will be... damaged,
[...]
it will become normal. A normal female.

CCC3022

And there goes his problem, buried under all that Automatism as it may be: if he doesn't slap her upside the head with reality, she'll grow up "normal" - and he means *a mess*, he's just too gone at this precise moment to realize that without *some* measure of 'embracing' she will indeed never recover.

His fear remains because he believes she would shatter, and that's where he was (fortuitously) very wrong: Kiri is no brittle piece of glass, she can take this. And he knows that what he's doing is a favor to her, painful as it may be on the moment. He knows, and he acts like this:

I waited, gently,
in the immediate vicinity,
for a long time.
CCC3027

This is not the behavior of an all-consuming monster dedicated to devouring Kiri. This is even less so:

I knew it, this is just forced, is it?
Were that truth and those acts still too much of a burden for Kiri?
But.
In this world.... there is one more day and no more.
I have neither chances nor methods to heal Kiri.
CCC3028

But the error at this point is his *lack of time*. He wants her to be "right" *and* still in this fantasy world of his (and, perhaps, hers). That's why it won't work until she truly sets her free.

As the relationship is complex, a brief recap helps here.
Taichi erroneously thinks Yutaka is still a rapist and is going after Kiri; Kiri guesses about Yutaka, but doesn't conclude anything; Taichi commands Yutaka to jump, he does, and Kiri sees everything; instead of confronting him, she jumps in his arms in her grief; Taichi erroneously attempts to wrest what remains of her affections for Yutaka to 'rescue' her from him without her knowledge; Kiri misunderstands, concludes Taichi murdered Yutaka,

Taichi concludes Kiri hates him for his stupid forced kiss; all the while he refuses to tell her more about Yutaka, possibly because it would hurt her.

And that's where things stand before the beginning of the story. A wonderful composition of cross purposes, half knowledge, poor communication, and misunderstandings both internal and external.

V.III.IV The Bathroom Scene

The scene where Taichi assaults Kiri in the bathroom should be the one conclusive scene that shows Taichi is at all the funny little pervert he looks like. This being Cross Channel, things are nowhere near as simple. In fact, examining the bathroom scene in full would require touching upon two more characters and many more elements[clxiii].

The first point of order is to remind how, regardless of his inability to do so correctly, Taichi is attempting to wean Kiri off of Yutaka; despite the results here being all but disastrous, he doesn't actually have the kind of bad intention that appears instead obvious. The question of whether what is doing is *unambiguously* wrong has to be asked, at least.

Next, the blood. There is a curious parallel between what Taichi is trying to do here and what he had Kiri do back after the rescue from Youko: in both cases, there's blood being cleaned. Taichi is obviously not thinking straight when he tries to lick off Kiri's menstrual blood, and when he gets blood on his fingers and attempts to repeat the finger-cleaning scene *directly* he's obviously gone.

And yet he was trying to stop the bleeding. That also has to be kept in mind.

Then there's this perplexing story he tells her, seemingly out of the blue:

Taichi: "Have you ever thought about how many kittens have died in agony on this Earth?"
[...]
Taichi: "Five cats are born, one is adopted. Lives blessedly. Happy end!"
[...]

Taichi: "Two die of cold and starvation. Agonizingly. They might just have gone insane at the very end."
Taichi: "One strolled off somewhere, and got eaten by a stray dog. He may not have suffered much, but who knows. Just, that the meaning of his life was to be a single day's meal for a stray dog with only a few years left."
Taichi: "And from that, the dog may also have gotten the strength to devour the siblings and the mother cat. Truth is, that that hasn't happened is something I simply cannot say."
[...]
Taichi: "And the remaining cat, what happened to that?"
Taichi: "...it got struck by a car and died!"
Taichi: "Being a kitten, it got flattened in a second."
Taichi: "Agony there isn't, but meaning there isn't either."
Taichi: "Meaning there isn't either..."
Taichi: "What the hell is up with a death like that?!"
Taichi: "And how many times has this repeated, over and over up, until this moment?"
CCC3022

This is of very difficult interpretation, but some parts of this are relatively understandable.

The dog would be Taichi, at least in his mind; the remaining cat is Yutaka, as the term used here is that same 'get struck down' kanji that illustrated part of how Taichi remembers him; the 'repeating' certainly reminds of the loop.

And there's an odd possible contradiction that stresses that: the dog having *possibly* gotten the strength to eat all the cats, including the ones that may have died in other ways and the one who had its happy ending: in the end, it may just be that Taichi has killed everyone, though not an interpretation I subscribe as anything but a very transparent troll.

There's also parallels with the route themselves: Misato's route, at least the first one, goes fairly well; Touko and Misato, subsequently, only end in tragedy, in particular Touko dies of starvation; Kiri's route can end with Taichi devouring Kiri, at least in his mind, or with him dead by de-facto suicide.

And if the mother is Nanaka, as she's the only actual mother character, *where is the father*? Like Taichi's (and most others') he seems nowhere to be seen, and as we'll see in the deeper analysis of the story, that is not the trivial detail it may seem[clxiv].

And then there's how this seems to have been inspired by Sakuraba:

Sakuraba: "A cat has died."
Taichi: "Eh?"
Sakuraba: "A cat got struck by a car and died. That's not good. Not good at all."
Taichi: "...ran over then... hoy... why are you crying?"
Sakuraba: "...I dunno. Maybe because of the cat."
Taichi: "Maybe you say..."
Sakuraba: "Can't stop."
Sakuraba: "...I can't stop."
CCD0002

If the cat ran over is Yutaka, then, remembering that he cries in sympathy:

Sakuraba: "Sob!"
Taichi: "What are you even crying for!"
Sakuraba: "But isn't Kirihara crying too?"
Miki: "The weeps are contagious!"
CCA0030

...then Sakuraba would be crying for the death of Yutaka, which Taichi *claims* he can't do[clxv], even before the actual death of Yutaka – not that it would matter, as Taichi killing Yutaka was an inevitability. That's not even the most bizarre coincidence regarding Sakuraba, in fact, this is perfectly credible considering his role.

If the death of the cat is Yutaka, and Sakuraba is crying in sympathy with Taichi, then Taichi himself is lamenting Yutaka in some form here. Because something happened to Taichi at this point that is very easy to forget: *he saw Touko dead.*

Even if Touko didn't die, he believes he has seen death; this triggered the memory of Yutaka's death, and he reacted in the way he knows how: first, self-deprecation in the mirror routine, then an intricate overlapping of good intents with bad results (he sounds like he is *seriously* worried about her, despite it all), cross-purposes, replaying of memories, and finally this borderline incomprehensible talk.

It may be nothing more than his way of grieving, tortuously overcomplicated as it may be.

V.III.V Does Kiri Have a Weapon?

Similarly to Touko's sword, Kiri's crossbow is far too conspicuous and dangerous for her to be allowed to run around with if the world still has people. Unlike Touko's sword, multiple people claim they see a crossbow, so it can't be eliminated the same way.

Weirdness still abounds, beginning from how she can pull it literally out of her behind:

Kiri took out her hand,
and it was grasping a crossbow.
[...]
Taichi: "WaitWaitWaitWait!"
Taichi: "That now was weird! A thing that size can't possibly fit inside a pocket!"
CCC0026

This one may be treated as a joke; however, there's plenty other strange things regarding Kiri's crossbow, some even sillier and more absurd than this, that yet are not treated as jokes at all. This suggest the above may also need to be taken seriously.

One example is her ability to fire that bulky weighty thing one-handed, unreliable graphics or not, given that Kiri is physically very weak:

Kiri: "...men are all so strong aren't they... Shima-senpai, for example, he's so slender yet he can lift one of those monitors on his own."
Taichi: "...that guy's ex-basketball club, that's why... he can't run, that's it, his physical strength remains."
Ahhh, but this girl can't even lift one of those CRT monitors on her own power then.
She's really lacking in strength.
Certainly the ones in the Club Room are pretty big.
When I touched her shoulder I was surprised by how awfully delicate it was.
It feels like it would shatter immediately, like a brittle thin plate.
If the Broadcast Club had an arm wrestling competition, wouldn't she fall dead last rank?
CCC3019A

We've already seen some oddities regarding Kiri's *frailty*, but this is about her *strength* and it is hard to deny.

So let's see the crossbow itself. The very first time Kiri takes out the crossbow, in that rooftop scene, Taichi describes it:

It's a Buckmaster Manufacture Maxpoint Crossbow.
Crank cocking aid optional is installed.
Is it woman spec then?
That said, it's still a powerful weapon for hunting. Seems usable even without training. More than enough killing power.
CCB0022

The crossbow model itself is real, and seems period accurate for 1998; unfortunately, it's long out of production and there's very little information[clxvi]. But there's one absurdity well outside the description: *how does Taichi recognize it on sight?* It's a fairly obscure American crossbow with a very specific attachment. It's not very visible in most graphics, but it also has a scope, useless at is in the story given how Kiri can barely hit anything at point-blank range with the thing.

It's also pretty *convenient* it has a crank cocking aid installed (it's woman spec as said). Even more so considering Miki has one that looks perfectly identical, although in fairness that one is never really described.

Then there's this:

Kiri sank her hand outside of the window,
[...]
dragging up,
a cloth parcel.
Was it set against the step on the outside of the window?
CCC3023

The oddity is not the parcel itself, nor the step though it's unseen: it's that she can do this in the first place. The rooftop is off limits – if only formally, like most things there – because of Yutaka's suicide and the always-broken piece of the fence[clxvii], and yet the third/fourth floor of this place has *openable windows with no kind of safety of any sort*? This is seen again soon after that, as the sex scene has her holding onto a window support, and Taichi teasing her by having her jut out of the very open window.

This is so blatantly nonsensical it's difficult to tell whether it's a plot hole or intended to demonstrate... I'm not even sure what, this goes well beyond the stupid even for Gunjou.

Next, if this is a town of overnight millionaires, where money can certainly buy them the ability to ignore many rules, *shouldn't they have found guns?* Yet, with the exception of Touko's very unlikely sword, we never see any other weapon in the story outside knives, a slingshot, water pistols and crossbows[clxviii].

All that would make far more sense were the crossbow be simply what he wants to see, but let's see more inconsistencies and hints before drawing conclusions.

Kiri's choice of training grounds is absurd. Kiri lives in the far south-east of the map, beyond Gunjou if coming from everyone else's houses (except

maybe Tomoki's, as his is not marked), as well as the furthest away from everyone else's (same).

However, her training ground is *all the way to the West of the town, past Taichi's house.*

This is nonsensical: there's no reason whatsoever for her not to stay exactly where she is to practice, as there's no one around who'd ever spot her. Most importantly, that would avoid her going past the house of the guy she's practicing to kill, as well as near Youko's house.

And while we're on the subject of odd places for her to go: heading straight towards the hokora when chased by Taichi near the end of the Miki route, despite that being a trapped dead-end[clxix].

This behavior of hers is absurd and difficult to explain, even considering the naïve and incoherent way she blustered in front of Taichi. Maybe she *is* trying to psych him in some way, but then again, she does sound genuinely surprised when Youko attempts to kill her. Perhaps even *too much so*.

The theory improves things a bit, because if everyone still exists, then practicing in the open with a weapon would be problematic: even if her parents are not home, there's still neighbors. As for why all the way out there, it may simply be she doesn't know where the two live[clxx].

Regardless, something is wrong with her having a crossbow that goes well beyond her ability to pull it out of her behind.

The possibilities split here: is whatever Kiri is holding against Taichi *purely metaphorical* or *real, but not a crossbow*? For the former, we have already seen some hints, namely, that Kiri is capable of making Taichi pass out simply with words. This is actually and explicitly compared to a weapon, multiple times:

Kiri: "Please do not call me without honorific..."
Kiri: "...remember your place in society."
It was a knife.

Piercing with slashes and thrusts.
CCC0014

And in that one ugly kiri-fuda line, looking close:

Talking with garrulity,
she goes to construct vivid images, overturning the pattern thus far
preserved within the name Sakura Kiri.
The knife that were those words were trying to stab at my very essence.
The dull knife that was all she possessed so far---
Became Sakura Kiri's kiri-fuda!
CCC3009

Her words are metaphorical knives, sometimes sharp as above, sometimes less so, as when she goes completely off the rail in the Miki route:

A grating noise that I can't bear to hear,
inviting disappointed dejection.
Taichi: "...not beautiful."
If the Kiri of always is nothing but a rusty knife,
this... is nothing more than an unrefined wooden log.
It has no precision.
It has no subtlety.
How long has it been since you became so hopelessly unrecoverable, Kiri?
Kiri: "...your eyes... are not the eyes of a human."
She talks about my eyes.
Is this even some kind of attack?
Yeah, it's an attack.
CCC4014

There's more hints of *words as knives*, courtesy of Miki:

I extend my hands towards her butt.
Miki: "Psk."
Stabbed.
Taichi: "O-, oww! What's that?"
Miki: "A knife."

It was a combat knife.
Taichi: "Whoa, that looks dangerous! Why are you carrying that thing around!"
Miki: "Kiri-chin told me to keep it."
Miki: "Ah, that stab right now was not the knife, just my pinky's fingernail. Faaake, faaake〜"
CCC3010

So she has a knife, but she didn't stab him with it. Why even show she has a knife? Because the knife is a lie:

Taichi: "You have a knife too, Miki-chin, right? I'd throw that away if I were you."
Miki: "But it's so useful to have, you know."
Kiri: "Why do you even have a knife?"
Miki: "Meeeow."
Kiri: "Ah, sorry."
Taichi: "That thing's reeeally useful, yes."
What sort of grammar could it even have.
Miki: "Useful in every single possible scene of daily life."
Taichi: "...oookay, so, well, if you don't give it over to Kiri you should be OK I guess?"
Miki: "Yes. That is how it'll be."
CCC3016

Liar liar, Miki! And that's not even the main point: the conversation *starts* as being about the knife, but Miki changes the subject partway through: it's now about catspeak. She's lying without lying, as she won't be giving her the knife, but the crossbow – except she promises not to give her the *catspeak*, not the knife. It's a mixed metaphor on its face that makes much more sense with the whole thing as having been about nasty language all along.

Let's consider catspeak itself: it has no known grammar, no understandable rules, and most importantly, it's completely and utterly irrelevant since what they're discussing can be extracted from context and the foreknowledge of events.

If we take that mixed metaphor seriously, then what she's promising is not to give Kiri something that is verbal and that Taichi cannot understand: her being her, she'd know better than Kiri to hit Taichi where it hurts, verbally speaking, and therefore this conflation of catspeak and knife[clxxi] would be a way to truly hurt Taichi.

This is fairly convoluted even by the standards set here, but I'm leaving it as an interesting possibility. There is another: that Kiri has some kind of real weapon, but not a crossbow. Stealing weapons from others would be a no-go from the standpoint of the theory, as a missing weapon could make it up to the police.

I would leave the idea that the Sakura family simply happens to have weapons as sort of *too* convenient, and instead remind that there is one source of weapons easily in Kiri's reach that may not be immediately considered: *the Club's survival games.*

The games themselves are only played with water pistols that we see, but what sort of water pistols is interesting: they are all called with realistic names, and the new graphics from the console version show extremely realistic guns.

It's implausible that kids would be allowed to tote realistic-looking guns, water or not, in gunphobic Japan, but let's chalk that up to either Gunjou being Gunjou or the artwork being unreliable.

The part of real interest is one little detail, never followed upon:

We also have proper BB gun type electric guns.
CCC4006

As Anton Chekhov reminds, leaving guns around the stage untouched is a big no-no, and this is a one-off never seen or heard of again. An electric BB gun would not fit Kiri's crossbow particularly well, as it would be capable of firing multiple rounds quickly, but if it were to be e.g. a pistol, then Kiri would be able to carry it (even in her pocket!) without attracting suspicion.

A BB gun, especially if airsoft, would not kill Taichi, but it would definitely hurt him at the kind of ranges Kiri is said to be capable of hitting a target at (<20m). A trip to the infirmary would certainly count as *Game Over* for him, as there's no way to dodge the issue of nurses then.

Kiri might be reprimanded, and the gun taken from her, but the Club has a virtually inexhaustible supply of money and it's doubtful that Gunjou would overly care about two students attacking each other. They certainly didn't blink at Taichi being on the rooftop along with Yutaka the jumper, or even care much about the jumper in general.

Finally, it would put this odd event in its proper context:

Misato: "And that water gun... is that a water crossbow?"
Taichi: "That is the real deal."
Misato: "Pfh..."
Swooned.
CCC4014

Misato may be dumb, at least apparently, but *water crossbow*? Come on. On the other hand, conflating a BB gun for a water pistol would not be so insane.

Unfortunately, as with Kiri's approach to the disappearance of mankind, there is still little more than conjecture and few solid leads. There's enough oddities that, in the context of all the rest, allow writing off Kiri's crossbow as hallucination, but no smoking gun, so to say.

And the still unanswered question, of all the weapons out there, *why a crossbow?*

V.IV The Witch, the Warlock and the 98 Game: Yamanobe Miki

Miki's archetype is that of the Genius Loli : highly capable academically (and perhaps practically) while still being very very clearly below the minimum age where that level of competency would be expected.

The simple twist is that she's often found Unreset, living in her own Eigentime and therefore is often much older than she looks and far more experienced than she should be; at certain points, she may be much older than the rest of the cast.

But if there's no time loop then her being Unreset is perfectly possible. In fact, it is *necessary*. The oddities would be the *others*, not Miki, and the impossible behavior of hers would be the *reset*, not the rest.

So why is she speaking of taking resets, living at the hokora and all that? Because that is where the true twist lies: she actually understands Taichi's game and is playing along with him. This is actually simpler to see than the existence of Taichi's own game, as there's plenty of hints that her and Taichi are on the same wavelength; once the 98 Game is established, the two "playing co-op" is a natural next step.

We've already touched on her imitative behavior, her insistent lies, or even how she gave us important reading keys for Taichi's Game, namely the six PM contact point and a possible total number of days in the loop.

We've also already looked over that scene at Tasaki right after she takes the Reset, where it is altogether *too* easy to deduce that no one is actually gone and she's just acting. There's much more where all that came from, as well as strange behavior regarding her Reset and Unreset status, and especially her *role* within Taichi's game.

Her playing *together* with Taichi also makes Miki fit better in the story, as she's the most incongruous character seen so far: unlike all other girls, she doesn't seem to suffer from this Rebellion Against the World that would get Taichi to fall for her.

Although she attempts[clxxii] a codependent relationship with Kiri, that happens *after* Kiri's own attempted codependency with Yutaka ends after his death. In fact, outside of later parts of the story, after she takes a reset, there is nothing whatsoever that would imply she has difficulties with loneliness, neither in seeking it nor in disliking it nor, as Taichi and Touko and Misato and Kiri, having a seek *and* dislike relationship with it.

And that's considering *she should not be Unreset at the start of the story.*

That's the difference between the rest of the girls and Miki, where the rest had something Taichi was attracted to, Miki is the only one that could have been more than some one-sided love: this is best seen in the Sendback route, which replicates a relationship from first date to her moving into his house, including talks of a baby.

V.IV.I Imitative Behavior

Miki: "Senpai, you're not camouflaging."
Miki: "You're just... trying to be a human."
Miki: "And, the one who was really a camouflaged parasite... was me."
CCC4021

Self-diagnosis is difficult to take seriously in Taichi's case, and in the whole of Cross Channel in general, but in Miki's case she hits close to home – or at least there's a good size of evidence that she does have problems understanding how to act. She's wrong, however, when she says she is *apathetic*:

Miki: "Welll, I do have the four basic emotions."
Miki: "I'm just apathetic with regards to others, pfui!"
CCC4022

As Taichi correctly points out, the way she ran to rescue Kiri was not the behavior of someone apathetic to others. That's the hint that whatever her problem is, it can be overcome with time; the problem itself is closer to an inability to understand *when* to correctly express emotions, and a difficulty in acting in “normal” ways:

Miki: "Hmmm, should I be happy, should I be angry? Well, for how long do you intend to continue touching this?"
[...]
Silent tears,
with sobbing neither, simply slipping down the curve of her cheeks.

If I were to imagine the tears flowing from an artist whose heart has been struck by beauty, this would be it.
This is not the shedding of someone subjected to sexual harassment, it can't be.
CCA0009B

When she says she doesn't know whether to be happy or sad, *she is not kidding.* In short, she would have something close to Asperger's [clxxiii] . So, as compensation, she copies off the behavior of other people, more or less wholesale; that is more of a perversion of the concept of *friends to grow a heart with* , however.

And so her problems begin when she starts copying Taichi, who is living off in his distant world with its rules she quickly gets (*genius* loli, don't forget), and more problematically constructing fixed patterns and repeating events over and over with no understanding of how those cyclical behaviors are no more likely to have positive results than acting at random, as the circumstances and the world changes.

We've seen her imitating Misato, but there's several examples of her directly and unquestioningly imitating Taichi. This is Taichi in the Miki and Kiri introduction to the club and the end of the first week:

I hug Touko's butt.
CCC3004

This is the end of the first week:

Miki hugged Touko's butt.
[…]
Touko: "You're even saying that all calmly... eEH, where do you think you're touching me?!"
Touko: "Ah, yAhn, wha... really stop iiit!"
Out come the tears.
Taichi: "Ah..."
Miki: "Ah..."
Confused, we release her.

CCA0030

Miki is duplicating something that Taichi already did, and is only releasing because Taichi does the same. Compare the ending of that “should I be happy...” scene, where Taichi releases Miki because he doesn't understand (or because *she* doesn't understand, it's all very nicely ambiguous).

And of course, there's that scene in the second half of the Kiri route and one of the most explicit examples of Miki acting like Taichi, down to basically quoting him:

Miki: "He just uses people, and then he himself sleeeeeeeps!"
Miki: "...sentenced to the removal of trousers."
Miki: "Slip, sliiip!"
Misato: "Wait Yamanobe-san, you are taking off his underwear too!"
Miki: "Slip, slip, sliiip!"
Misato: "Wait, waaait!"
Miki: "After all, once a woman has gotten this far, she cannot stay unsatisfied!"
Miki: "I shall do nothing but penetrate through to the end!"
Misato: "Those are very Peke-kun-ish things you say..."
Misato: "We are teacher and pupil, that is why."

CCC3018

This actually causes a fair bit of emotional damage to him, who in his usual way completely misinterprets everything and rushes to assume the girls are running away from him for his looks, and not because he's half naked. This scene is played for laughs, but just reading carefully what he says afterwards it's obvious that's not the case for him[clxxiv].

Of course, it was still his overly familiar behavior with regards to Kiri and Misato that landed him passed out – *or was it*, given he has a very possible propensity to narcolepsy?

The major point to take away here is the concept of *teacher and pupil*, which indeed is their (theoretical) relationship, and indicates the entry point as players in the 98 Game. Said relationship will be much more complex,

because while Miki has difficulties understanding how to act like a “normal” person, she has far less difficulties understanding narrative tropes.

V.IV.II Miki's Approach: Playing Along

Teacher and pupil is not a relationship that starts from nothing, though theirs had the signs right from the beginning. Taichi's very first approach to Miki was while wearing a spooky gas mask, breathing with Darth Vader sounds[clxxv].

And rather than being spooked, Miki was amused more or less all the way through. Perhaps it was just her inability to 'get' it, after all, her imitative behavior means she is unlikely to have a basis from which to tell that Taichi was acting very wrong.

After that, there seems to have been some kind of failed Experiment:

I made Miki too much of a mimidoshima, gave her too much superficial knowledge about the world, so I sorta failed that one.
She quickly split through my actions and found the real motives on the bottom.
And now, I've been made into just her playmate.
CCA0013

As with Touko (and we'll see it's similar with Yusa), it's very unlikely this experiment was anything Taichi says it is. There's not much said on this, however, but it's easy to see that the experiment did not fail as he says it did: Miki *did* fall in love with him. Being her playmate is to be in tune with her more or less perfectly, it seems.

I fix my eyes on Miki's pupils,
and Miki returned my fixed gaze at me.
Hand and hand grasp reciprocally.
Spin and spin in a revolving. Dancing.
Taichi: "Ahahah!"
Miki: "Hoh hoh hoh!"
There was empathy there,
and understanding, and liberation, and the four basic emotions.

Two people who were able to dance together for all of eternity.
CCC4015

This little vignette, added in the console version, shows so much of the relationship between the two, which is closer to that of peers and kindred souls, of two people capable of instinctively going at each other's pace. This ability to *match pace* is how their relationship should be read.

On the beach, when Taichi makes his Gunnery Sargent Hartmann impression, Miki not only plays along but correctly recognizes his rank and very likely the reference, and plays the obedient subordinate (as well as adding her twist with the random honorifics):

Miki: "Sa-Sa-Sargeant-donooo! Miyasumi-senpai was made to swooon!"
[…]
Miki: "SaSaSargeant-kakkaaa! Miyasumi-senpai is foamiiing! Foamiiing!!!"
CCA0027

When she spots Misato in handcuffs, same:

She gave a military salute.
Taichi: "What's all this then, Constable Yamanobe?"
Miki: "Sah! Today the infirmary appears to be vacant!"
CCA0021

Even later on, in her Sendback, she plays the customer:

Miki: "That's one cramped hotel you got here, Mr. Manager."
Taichi: "Ah, we have a most favorable reputations among guests with phobia of wide spaces."
CCD4003

These are the little details, but they begin to show how easy, spontaneous, and almost instinctive is the playing between these two, as well as who should be higher and who should be lower on the hierarchy.

That's not to say they always get along flawlessly. While Taichi can't stop himself from playing his game(s), he often recognizes he is, in fact, playing games, and has some measure of brake. Miki, however, has difficulties taking things in the correct spirit:

Miki: "Chastity terminated."
Miki yielded.
Miki: "The wind is talking to me. The days of virginity are short, long though they appear. This day, in one step I will become adult. In a way that I absolutely did not wish for or expect..."
She reads the narration for an Imaginary broadcast program.
Taichi: "That was a joke."
[...]
Taichi: "Weren't you cleaning?
Bob, she nods.
Taichi: "Therefore, gladden me with a most prompt continuation of cleaning!"
Taichi: "That is my desire."
[...]
I didn't do enough to cause her problems.
She struck down herself, then she raised back up by herself.
CCB0008B

To her defense, Taichi's behavior between seriousness and joke can be difficult to tell, it's one of the reasons this whole thing exists; problem is that even in this scene she's taking things altogether too seriously, probably even more so than Kiri herself does.

In short, Miki seems all nice and cheerful, but is hiding an inability to understand emotions; she's also often found cleaning. Now, if she were sort of manipulating some events in the background, and were to be secretly something that could be considered a villain, she'd be a perfect shoe-in for a certain Nasuverse character [clxxvi] .

Naturally, that's the case. Narratives need villains, after all; and what better villain than a friend, no, a pupil turned traitor?

V.IV.II.I Science Betrayed and Demonic Penises

The reading key for the way the two play together is in the Kiri route, when Taichi is held at crossbow point and ordered to strip. The entire game is extremely metaphorical, and all but explains what is really going on between the two.

Miki: "I have said to remove your belows."
Taichi: "....."
Taichi: "You sure?"
So I proclaim with seriousness.
Taichi: "That means to expose 'this' to the public, do you know that?"
Miki: "Making threats at this late stage, are you?"
Taichi: "Fool! You fail to comprehend how scary this thing is!"
Taichi: "You think it's like that crossbow, some sweet little thing that even a beginner can easily control?"
Taichi: "All throughout the world, endlessly will it greedily devour those membranes we call hymens, those girls we call virgins... it is truly a demon."
Taichi: "If it is released but once, the disappearance of the dazzling radiance of virgin girls from the world is a certainty."
CCC3002

This hints at something very important with regards to Taichi, and in particular what is very likely to be his *real* problem. Regardless, this is where the playing begins: like children making things up and playing pretend, things are fluid, the cast changes and there's little proper narrative flow:

Miki is serious.
Taichi: "...do you intend to return everything to nothing?"
Miki: "What if I say I do?"
Taichi: "But! You... the person you are... you are still a scientist!"
Miki: "Science is thorough investigation to its inevitable conclusion. Science is the progress through and beyond the taboos."
[...]
Miki: "Science performed while looking backwards is meaningless, Professor."

Taichi: "Ngh, did you sell your soul to the devil?"
Miki: "Indeed, just like Einstein."
CCC3002

And here we get to the heart of the game: Miki is acting the villain. Not just any villain, but one that was a former collaborator – or because this is known: former *pupil* – of Taichi, who has then since rebelled and turned evil.

The reason is never given, nor is any needed: it's narrative contrivance at its purest form!

This is the real trick to understanding the game: she *knows* this is about Settei, she *knows* that this is a narrative-inspired, narrative-generated, narrative-*generating* world, and like all narratives it needs an obstacle: a villain.

As quoted at the beginning of the previous chapter, Miki thinks herself to be the monster in human clothing, not Taichi; therefore, while Taichi has all the markings of an anti-hero (or a straight up Villain Protagonist), with the backstory to match - as did Yutaka - Miki sets *herself* up as the Villain in Taichi's story.

And so begin her Dastardly Nefarious Acts, such as taking Taichi's trousers off or making him drink expired drinks:

Those in the know know it well, it was Nee**n.
Chug it! One gulp!
Miki: "Best drunk before looking at the expiration date."
Taichi: "G'blagh!"
It had entered the trachea.
Taichi: "G'khoff, g'khaff!"
CCC0009

Or was it expired? Taichi *never* checks the expiration date, nor does he drink enough to suffer aftereffects. But the takeaway is still important: *she*

told him something, and he just up and believed it without checking or blinking.

Her words affect him *directly* : it's little wonder he's convinced of the existence of a parallel world and of the veracity of Sakakibara's diary, despite the latter being no evidence whatsoever for the former and all the suspicious things around it. Her word is good enough for him.

These will neither be the first nor the last times she'll up and convince Taichi of something; it's simply a part of their Game.

Now, villains need right-hand men, and there is where Kiri comes in. Kiri does play actively into the game, as it's been suggested in the Sendback beach game and as we'll see more of, but that doesn't mean she understands much of it. In the middle of that scene, she all but throws up her hands, goes to the toilet, and returns to find them still going at it:

Kiri put away the crossbow and went into the toilet.
Miki: "Self-Destruct Button?"
Taichi: "Indeed. For I absolutely cannot let this... this mephistophelic masterpiece loose onto the world!"
Miki: "..."
Taichi: "Be all at peace, ladies. My wife, my son, sorry... forgive your stupid father!"
Taichi: "...hm?"
Taichi: "What is the meaning of this? Why doesn't the Device work?"
Miki: "...heheh, all your actions and behaviors I have long ago seen through, Your Highness!"
Kiri: "The cast has changed..."
Returning from the toilet, Kiri sluggishly readjusted her crossbow posture.
Taichi: "The wiring... dammit! The hell is this!"
CCC3002

Continuing their game, there's no actual way for Taichi to know that Miki had somehow sabotaged the ~~triggering system~~ self-destruct. It's not telepathy, it's simply that the two play along: if Miki is the villain, then narrative necessity claims she *must* have done something that would

prevent the hero the most obvious out. This may even explain some of the biggest mind-reading oddities in her own route.

And, because nothing is ever random here, the point of contention is the *wiring*: the part that's always said to be the hardest to set up in the antenna, the one that usually takes Tomoki to do. Even in the final pre-credits scene "Tomoki" will say that the problem was the wiring, and in that case the hallucination likely means *inside of Taichi's brain*.

In the ending of the scene, however, we see something odd from this standpoint:

Taichi: "Heh..."
Taichi: "Did you forget now, that there are TWO nipples!"
Miki: "?!?"
Taichi: "Wallowing in your science, ergonomics caught you off-guard...
Miki-kun, this is how you are beat!"
Miki: "'Cause I'll let ya!"
CCC3002

In a story where most science is troll, scientist-turned-evil Miki attempting to rely on science but being beat by an insufficient knowledge of the human body (and mind) is extremely important, and will play into the deepest interpretations of Cross Channel.

And then, *she attempts to kill Taichi over this*. As said at the start, she has difficulties understanding exactly where to cut it out, and it's far from impossible that like with the mop thing, she simply got carried away too far.

This sort of game, where the rules change, also explains their signature collection game: first, all signatures are Taichi's, meaning the two of them are playing the game with each other; he says there are others involved, but this is never seen or even heard of. Second, the nature and origins of the ID booklet – perhaps even the name 'MateBook' – are random and keep changing. Third and last, the name and the effect of collecting signatures (or Princess Stamps or...) varies.

Their games are fluid and prone to sudden unpredictable swerves even at that simple level.

In all of this, it shouldn't be forgotten that Miki may be playing the villain out of narrative necessity, but she is not without goals herself: what she tries to do throughout is to *stabilize* the world, to save herself she says, but as she uses an exploit in Taichi's Game to do so, what she's doing is also helping Taichi in his flight.

That's likely how she understood the hokora system: she followed Taichi there multiple times, watched him "rediscover" the notebooks, overheard him speculate, and realized that the contents of the hokora don't reset in his Settei.

Her work to stabilize the world is sincere, and as we'll see once we examine the deepest themes, her attempt at helping Taichi is both very sincere and very important for Taichi - especially the parts that seem like irrelevant lies.

This help itself is telling about how much of an insect dressed as a human Miki also is.

V.IV.III Miki vs. Taichi

Their more or less little games are interesting on their own, but it's the big Game that's of importance here, the one that Taichi would be playing and that Miki is participating it not unknowingly but directly.

This is where a very interesting metaphor for Taichi's (and by extension Miki's) ability to *forge reality* (if only inside their minds!) comes to be: good old fashioned *magic*. First of all, Taichi is a wizard of sort, in fact, Tomoki says it explicitly in the Mikiri introduction, when Taichi somehow manages to make people incapable of tossing away the items he gives them:

Tomoki: "You a Magician or something."
CCC3004

The term used is "mahoutsukai". In the Nasuverse, that term, usually translated as Magician, refers to the ones capable of *truly* messing with

reality, and I do suspect that this is a reference much like his Mystic Eyes are.

The theory revolves around him making things up, not having actual magic powers, but by looking at this next piece of text with this idea of *magicians being able to alter reality* (if in the sense of *making things up and living in this fantasy world*), its meaning changes substantially:

Because I am heterogeneous.
To not cause fright is a must.
To not have my unsightliness perceived is a must.
This underlying ugliness of mine has a direct connection to my image of the witch.
The origin... childhood fairytales or something I guess?
Maybe I had read in a book that the history of witch hunts was extremely vicious, and it's possible I have ended up having embraced the prejudice that witches are indeed truly wicked, or something of the sort.
And then the white hair, as well looks so characteristically diabolic.
The glittering of these pupils, same.
There's no limit to things to be anxious about.
CCD2002

The idea he would ever end up agreeing with the stereotype of truly wicked witches by looking at the history of the witch hunts is just bizarre; of all the weird conclusions to have, *the witches were evil* is by far the strangest.

This still fits into his very odd understanding of things, not so much his insisting in bringing up the irrelevant Paul Dirac when discussing MWI, but in how he finds the *regeneration mechanics* of Phantasy Star II to be memorable rather than what most people remember it for.

The core of the point is in how much this concept of Taichi being *heterogeneous* due to his being a witch, at least in his looks, changes when considering sorcery as some kind of ability to play in a world of his own imagination: the angst at his *looks* can then be read as being directed not so much at how he actually looks like, but at how easy it is for others – at least

in his mind – to recognize who he is and therefore that he's living off in his own world [clxxvii] .

This well ties back to his backstory: his life in the half-real world of the Hasekuras, forced to play essentially a character in a live role-playing game together with other people who had the consistency of NPCs.

That is, until Youko; and because of what Youko did to him, the question of whether that life in this fantasy world was *that* evil or *that* mistaken becomes far more complex to answer than the obvious, as well as besides the current point.

Taichi would then be a witch, which works maybe even better than *warlock* as he's plenty gender confused, and well matches Miki who is repeatedly compared to a witch herself:

Miki is my Kouhai, a first year.
She has a hairstyle similar to that of those three female magicians in that fantasy series that's super famous worldwide.
Looks, certainly, but the resemblance is more thorough.
She might not be able to use magic, but one could call her a sorceress of words.
CCA0004

The series referenced here is Charmed , which fits both the timeline and her hairstyle.

This girl so like the heroine of that famous fantasy novel adapted to the big screen stands up.
Be at ease. That's just her looks.
CCA0008

The heroine referenced here is ~~Hermione~~ ~~Hermione~~ ~~Hermione~~ unfortunately unknown and I don't care how the Deus Ex Chaos scene proves it beyond possible doubt[clxxviii].

Taichi: "Private『Mountain Witch * Yamanba』Miki!"

Miki: "Oss, this is Yaman-O-be. Yes!"
CCC3004

山姥 Yamanba, a simple mispronounciation but a very telling one, and the cementing hint that Miki is a fellow witch to Taichi.

And so, we have two witches playing a game of pretend reality, whisking in other people more or less without their consent and awareness, and playing around with possibilities, possibilities which will get written down in the diaries and may not exist outside of their minds and said writings.

There are no red truths here, however. You can either pay attention or you can be screwed[clxxix].

What to pay attention to is comparatively simple: the oddities that show the flaws in Miki's behavior with regards to the 98 Game; by showing their *intentionality* , they also show that there's a game in the first place.

There's many ways in which Miki slips up and lets us peek at the guts of the 98 Game, including inconsistent behaviors with her status as Unreset.

V.IV.III.I She Runs (I Mean Slips)

Although the reference to Kinnikuman seems odd, fact is Miki has her share of slip-ups due to her inexperience. In this chapter, we'll mostly see oddities with regards to underwear [clxxx] .

For some reason, Miki decides she has to get underwear new from the Atomic General Store:

Taichi: "I think that maybe you went for underwear procurement to Atomic General Store (formerly Kimura General Store), because they sell normal underwear and adult underwear side-by-side there."
Taichi: "Say, isn't that just near that apartment building[clxxxi]? Must be the lineup for the partners of those young wives!"
CCB0008B

She will actually have the same even in the Kiri route:

What reflexes! What flexibility! What a tag still attached on the bra peeping out of her armhole! Nothing of this escaped my eyes!

CCC0016B

She says she's doing so because she can't clean her own underwear, but that's dodging the issue: *what about her uniform?* She seems to have more than one, as she's said to come to Taichi's home with a new one in her Sendback route, and maybe she can change that every two-three days, but even that seems insufficient.

Even that's overthinking things: *both* scenes take place on Monday. She didn't have clean underwear at home at *all*? When she did on the Monday of the first week, as she doesn't have sex shop panties on? She also has normal panties on Sendback, as the sex scene CG clearly shows her in normal panties.

This is simply Miki breaking facade.

Perhaps the first week she did wash her stuff; given she's not wealthy, it's not impossible she had all or most of her clean underwear with her at the Camp, so she'd have had to wash it basically when coming home. And given her mother doesn't seem to make her breakfast *or* lunch, there's little doubt she'd have to do things on her own. Next week, she simply couldn't be bothered (let's face it, Miki is definitely the lazy type), and there go the panties - which you can bet on being stolen, as well.

Which she may have stolen on the way to school, meaning she went there either with dirty underwear, or naked underneath. Her stealing the stuff on the way to school, much like she does at Tasaki, would sort of explain why the bra still has the tag attached.

Less so why she would take lace panties that are actually *play* panties without understanding even what they are. Is she simply grabbing lacy stuff to appear more adult, given her Unreset status, and failing because of her ultimate lack of experience?

And then, there's this slip-up:

Miki: "My Elephant Cover that I bought at the Atomic General Stooore?!"
CCC4003

She does use 買った bought. Of course she might have bought it before the Fall, which would be odd, but not too much. If she's copying Taichi, then she'd have a stash of perverted clothes for other people, just like Taichi has swimsuits that would fit Misato for reasons best not examined too closely.

The possibility that she's hinting that the shop is *still* manned, however, is at least as high.

The final thing of note is how Taichi will then recycle the elephant cover in the Miki Sendback route, and will offer the play panties to Touko in the Youko route. If the former is tit-for-tat, the latter is the master taking inspiration from her pupil.

V.IV.III.II When is Miki Unreset?

The great reveal in her route is that Miki has understood, at least partially, the power of the hokora to avoid the reset of the time loop, and has been living as Unreset in her Eigentime for an unknown amount of time. The hints are already piling up that it's nothing of the sort, of course.

First question: *how many routes ago has she been Unreset?*

Turns out it's not a trivial question to answer, as there's plenty of evidence that her status as Unreset is suspiciously ambiguous throughout most of the story. Let's see the hints week by week and draw conclusions:

Week 1

- Appears to be possibly very annoyed at playing the autograph game. She has obvious difficulties correctly expressing emotions, so it's difficult to be more specific than this. She might *actually* be nostalgic for it.
- Has bigger breasts than Taichi expected, beyond the loli/flat chest archetype.

Of course, that might be just that Taichi hasn't groped her in a while.
- Acts far too energetic compared to Sendback, when she's supposedly Reset.

Does she reset at the end? Yes, she's on the rooftop at six o'clock, meaning she has no chance to make it back in time.

Result: inconclusive. There's already plenty to be suspicious about here, from her breasts being oddly too big according to Taichi, but most importantly, due to her obvious differences in behavior between now and the Youko route.

Week 2

- She doesn't buy the last "Vegetable Juice" at the beginning, which is a change in the pattern;
- Jumps straight up when Taichi comes by, seemingly taken off-guard by not being attacked.
- Much sharper on her jokes.
- Attacks him implying that Taichi is the culprit for eliminating mankind.
  It's an elaborate multilevel pun involving cleaning out/erasing, but that's the ultimate implication. Does she know about his "parallel universe observational power", actual or in the Game? Or, if she's only playing the game with him, is she attempting to influence the Settei already?
- She manages to get him with a kick.
  Although admittedly it's just him staring at her panties, the very fact she attacks him is odd.
- Can dodge his skirt flipping.
- Has an odd talk that sounds very much like she regrets Taichi not changing:

Miki: "He's started it again, this guy..."
Miki: "Nothing at all... despite that."
[...]
Miki: "When it's all normal with everyone."

CCB0008

- She knows he's vulnerable to blood, which Taichi implies she has no way of knowing.
  That is of course false, given she could've fairly easily deduced that in the Beach scene, a year earlier. The problem is how in the first week she has no problem showing him blood, while in this week it's not the case. The implication is that she now knows he should not be *exposed* to blood.
- She threatens to kill him if he doesn't stop with the skirt flipping.
  An unusually tough reaction from her.
- She imitates Misato's reaction from the "limbo photoshoot[clxxxii]" scene back in the previous week.
- If picking to go back on the Misato route, the scene is conspicuously different.
- In the ending, oddly implies that someone "needs" to be shot, hurrying Kiri along.

Does she reset at the end? Inconclusive. If the Misato route is taken again, then her cadaver is on screen[clxxxiii], otherwise it's left ambiguous whether she does have enough time to run away to the hokora between Kiri killing Touko and Taichi's death.
Result: Inconclusive, but given how inconsistent this is with Week 1, it's already much more likely.

Week 3

- Oddly shocked at him knowing she's cleaning.
- Seems oddly surprised at his quoting the diaries.
  Both of these are ambiguous, of course.
- Uses the same description for 'karade' that Misato and Tomoki use ("meaning incomprehensible").
  Admittedly this may just be a running gag.
- Completely kicks his ass when it comes to fighting.
  No excuses here; but the two playing together may be just that.
- Knows his weak spot on the kneecaps.
  This has pretty much no excuse.
- Uses this line:

    Miki: "Mimi-senpai is resuming club activities, did you know?"

First, she's using Misato's nickname that should be only for Taichi's use[clxxxiv]. Second, he's using the same line that Taichi used at the end of the corridor scene in the first week, except where Taichi was vague, she's blatantly lying. She's pushing Taichi towards the club, and hard.

- Has no issues claiming that Kiri and Taichi are "worthy rivals". As Kiri's her right-hand man and all, but once again, she had something similar in the first week.
- Lies explicitly about who told who to get armed, and who told who to begin their process of secession.
  Then again, Kiri does that even after Miki takes a reset.
- Acts differently in the pool scene and the Shimura Phenomenon lunch with comparison to the Youko route and Kiri Sendback, including this extremely suspicious line in this route's pool scene:

  Miki: "I have the heart of an old lech, TEH'RYAAA!"

  CCC0039
- Appears to understand Taichi is lying about Touko's survival, talks suspiciously about the *toilet* (where the event would've happened), then quickly runs away to give Kiri her crossbow.
- Appears to know that something happened between Kiri and Taichi right after that.

Does she reset at the end? Yes, one hundred percent. There originally was some minor leeway, but the console versions add this one line:

Miki: "...Kiri-chin"

CCC3030

It's completely useless, except the very next click, the loop phenomenon begins. What this line achieves is nothing outside of proving that Miki takes the reset, which would be completely against her personality.

Result: very likely Unreset. The hints are everywhere, and are very heavy. Her behavior does not match the previous routes, nor does it match post-reset routes. The problem is that her taking a reset is simply a certainty, and this goes against what she says about herself.

The fourth week is all explicit, so there's no need to look too closely to it. It does have its oddities, like this part:

Taichi: "Scared?"
Miki: "Scared."
Miki: "That my self would disappear... it's scary."
CCC4021

These are nearly the same words Taichi uses at the end of the Kiri route, right before disappearing. Of course the two are similar as people; but this still remains suspicious.

As for her post-Reset status, we've already seen that the Tasaki scene is easy to interpret in a very different way, as well as offering suspicious hints that she remembers despite everything. There's one more thing to note at this point: in the post-Reset Youko, her breasts are referred once as boylike in their flatness; and if her body has changed, then she did take the Reset.

However, Taichi was making fun of them in the first route as well and yet she surprised him, so that's not the damning statement it looks like, whether she was Unreset back then or not.

V.IV.III.III Taking a Reset Without Taking a Reset

The addition of that line at the end of the Kiri route is the single most damning element of this all, and excludes a possible writing error. Either the Miki in Kiri's route isn't Unreset, or she took a reset.

The first is ridiculous considering the hints, the latter completely against everything we're told about her. Even considering Miki and Taichi's similarities to go as far as having slightly different behaviors every week, as Nanaka says of him, the obvious *increase in skill* throughout the routes makes neither option appear remotely plausible.

That's not to say Miki is the only character that improves: Misato grows just that bit faster on the uptake about Taichi's perversions; Touko grows further and further into isolation; and if both of these can be considered just the

writing becoming more refined, not the Settei, there's how Kiri becomes a near killing machine.

In the Miki route, Kiri begins to be capable of beating Taichi, who should be far beyond her skills. The footrace at the start is its own oddity, but the race at the end isn't. Taichi may say he's taking it leisurely, but she *is* outracing him. And then – facts, not words – she nearly shoots him to death, whatever it may really mean, and he freezes up *in terror* at something he simply had no way of predicting.

Now, Taichi doesn't really act to kill Kiri, despite her being insane and out for his blood, but it remains that she beats him. She even manages to load and fire a bolt when he was sure she would never have the composure to. And yet, like Miki's boobs are too large for a loli, she manages to.

All this works right if we remove the actual reset phenomenon: everybody's slight progress makes sense, as they're slowly growing if never *truly* changing, as doing that would require getting 'over' whatever it is that keeps them stagnating in their rut.

The reset would still only exist *literally* in Taichi's head: the rest of the characters keep doing the same mistakes, the same choices, and the same actions over and over and over, because that's what being a flawed human being is.

And in all that, Miki's very tears for the disappearance of mankind once Reset is the greatest of tricks: her having taken a reset should have made her *less* capable of behaviors like that. With time, she was capable of at least caring enough for Kiri to rescue her at the cost of her own health, but those tears at the Tasaki store are necessarily fake.

Whether she still has that growth and the tears are sincere or she's trying to fool Taichi is harder to tell, given that her motive for the latter is still unclear - as is her motive for lying to him about the Sakakibara diary and the whole idea of two separate worlds crossing.

And while lying would explain how she manages to act so differently after the Reset, whether she took any before or not, there's still to consider the effect of her Reset on the Game: she is, with that action, leaving her role in it[clxxxv].

But while it could be said that the 98 Game had its actual start at the end of the Training Camp, Taichi having some kind of Game very likely predates that, what with how he keeps trying to recreate fixed patterns of the past; So what Miki is leaving is not Taichi's life, but her role as villain.

A role that went on for a good long while before things precipitated this far, given how Kiri still waves that crossbow about - provided *she* isn't also a player.

And so the question becomes *why?* What happened that made her abandon the Game?

The answer given (that she fell in love and wanted to spend her last moments with Taichi as he is now) doesn't fully work if there's no reset, since those are *not* her last moments.

The other part of the answer would be how her role as a villain has failed. Not only this time, but failed *for good*: she's been hit with the realization that no matter how hard she tries, no matter how well she does, no matter how perfect she is in the manipulation, Coincidence will come in and wreck everything.

She will *never* attain the Idyllic Perfect Safe loop world that she wants; in short, she will never attain Utopia or, to stay on theme, an Eden that never falls. Her Well-Intentioned Extremist villain act is nonviable, and Taichi's talks also helped her understand this: and so the Hero(?) pulled the Villain away from her path via the Power of Friendship and Twu Wuv. The End.

There's more to consider with the metaphorical meaning of the reset and the hokora, of course, but there's also how Miki's "Reset" is not a completely selfless act, or rather, she also gains something from this.

Miki is very literally playing a *game*, and that game is holding her back. This line in her Sendback route shows it:

Miki: "But, the more I play with you Senpai... the less it's satisfying... and Kiri-chin's no more... and all the others too... my parents, and my classmates too..."
CCD4003

This echoes a line in her own route:

Miki: "For some reason, I feel a sort of solitude."
Taichi: "....."
Miki: "As if somehow it was all hollow."
Miki lowers her weapon.
Miki: "And by talking to you now, Senpai, it's all become even more hollow."
CCC4021

This line was pre-Reset, and besides it being quite suspect that she would say something identical *after* that Reset, it suggest that she knew of this one way or the other long before the 98 Game got into its present status.

Playing Taichi's pre-loop Game means following certain rules, one of which is that Taichi decides who's in and who's out of the Game - no one else. It's clear how this Game would become tired and hollow for Miki.

Add how the loop Game relies on the players being unable to continue on ahead, stuck in their rut: what she may be rebelling against would be greater than Taichi's own rules. It's a Game greater than Taichi's own that yet has people in a time loop of sorts, with the grinding repetitiveness and predictability of human behavior itself.

What she is rebelling against is the very nature of the world. In that, however, Coincidence has not been her enemy but a sign written in great big letters that says "THIS WILL NOT WORK".

She has plenty of reasons to *leave* the game, then; but one question is still not fully settled: why would she want to play the Game in the first place. That's easily answered in how she doesn't want to stop being “herself”. But that is a massive error on her part:

Miki: "Someday will come when it'll be impossible, that I'll just have to take a reset, but..."
Miki: "That's already... because I, as I am now, am already a different person..."
CCC4021

That's more of a Peter Pan syndrome, and one that would inevitably fail. Despite the “loop” that is the tedium and predictability of real life, remaining the *exact* same person is impossible; the body ages if nothing else does.

That is why the 98 Game is still visible despite relying on human behavior despite it all: even if human nature pushes towards stereotyping, *something* prevents that from fully coming to fruition.

Once again we see that there is a truth behind the lie of the 98 Game, as it involves human nature and greater forces *for* and *against* this “looping” that exists outside Taichi's game; but that is still a matter for the final chapters.

It remains that this growing up and over this Peter Pan syndrome even just a tiny little bit, and therefore beyond her attachment to the Game, means that the two could never be together to the end: Taichi has *something* calling him in to stay in the Game that goes beyond what had called her there in the first place.

V.IV.III.IV The Nonexistent Bodies

If Miki is the Villain of the piece, then like all good villains she need a Dragon , a second in command who will act as muscle: enter Kiri. Kiri serves a straightforwards role in that: she's her enforcer and her body guard, with a personal history with the “hero”.

So straightforwards that the “plot twist” is that Miki is actually manipulating Kiri behind her back: it's the kind of story ripe for her to make a Heel-Face Turn if Taichi were only to play his cards well [clxxxvi] .

Examples of this manipulation exist before the story itself starts; that's how she brings Kiri at the beach:

Miki: "Sorry, I deceived you. Senpai asked me to do it whatever the cost."
CCA0027

The deceit itself is never described, but that's more of an early bird hint; the reading key is elsewhere, as was already seen it's the nearly incomprehensible beach volley/survival game in the Kiri Sendback route.

Its rules are never given, in fact, without being told so much as what the game was *inspired* by, there would be little way for the reader to have the faintest idea of what's going on. In short, it's about as hard to understand as the main storyline.

But it's with this that we know that Miki is somehow roping Kiri[clxxxvii] into the 98 Game, as is visible when examining some of the events in the game, even outside the rules. The game is a Miki and Kiri vs. Taichi (unsurprisingly) and involves low blows on Miki's side:

Miki: "Peeew!"
Taichi: "Come on now, no real attacks until the first receive!"
Miki: "Ehhh, I'm not attacking! I just mimicked the words with the mouth!"
Taichi: "That's cowardly!"
CCD3003B

And distracting to him, since he tends to take things she says a little seriously.

Miki and Kiri combine for an attack, but since cats can't hit a monkey(?), they fail. This is how they win:

Taichi: "If I can't attack, then pure volleyball alone will be enough!"

Miki: "...what?"
Kiri: "Cocksure isn't he."
Miki: "Yep, waaay cocksure. Alllway like this."
Kiri: "But that's just bravado isn't it."
Miki: "Yep, just an ostentatious show-off he is."
Taichi: "Come ooon, don't talk smack about someone in front of theeem!"
Miki: "He stopped, snipe attaaack!"
Kiri: "Snipe attaaack!"
Taichi: "Uwaaah!"
Miki: "Team Mikiri wins!"
CCD3003B

They first have Taichi run out of ammo – it's two against one – and then, they hit at his vulnerable point: *self-confidence*. This well evidences the dynamic between the three: Kiri easily works along with Miki to bring down Taichi.

This the game and reading key; now, to see how this translates in the actual 98 Game.

The first difficulty is with *how seriously* Kiri takes all this. Given the way she acts, she sounds one hundred percent dead-set serious, but as shown when examining her, it's a put-up of bluster constructed after a process of self-conviction.

Kiri's major trait is her immaturity, her inability to take things with the proper weight, far more so than Miki in fact. To understand Kiri is to keep in mind the way she quickly switches away from a behavior the instant she has enough data to make a conclusion, correct or incorrect.

This combination is volatile, however, and makes it very possible that Kiri is playing along with Taichi *even if she doesn't quite realize it*. After all, that weakness is how Miki manipulates her: by feeding her half-truths and misinformation, leveraging this personality flaw of her.

There's also mentions of compromising pictures, which she does use to goad Kiri into coming on a date with Taichi, but those photos don't exactly

stop her from snapping once the bodies start turning up, do they.

And so, it's very possible that Taichi can manipulate her, in a sense, but since neither of them quite understands this at anywhere near a conscious level, seeing this manipulation is *much* harder than it is the one coming from Miki.

Certainly, Taichi manipulating Kiri's behavior in more than a few ways makes reading things like her behavior regarding the "disappearance" of mankind or her weapon far easier to interpret. Unfortunately, there's little clear evidence of this.

However, a hint that Kiri is suggestible way beyond what it may look like on first look appears when examining a mystery that thus far hasn't really been approached in this interpretation of Cross Channel: if there's no loop and no one dies, what about all the bodies?

The first perspective trick played here is that *no one* outside of Kiri, Miki and Taichi ever sees a body. It is implied that Misato did see – and, with callousness completely out of character, hid – Tomoki's body, but that's just that: an implication. The only people who ever claim to haven seen the bodies are these three.

Since Miki and Taichi are playing a known game, and Kiri is easily manipulated to the point where she may well be playing as much as the rest, things become fairly easy to explain. In fact, the only thing that needs to be accounted for is Kiri, because Miki has reasons to get Kiri to "see" bodies, and Taichi is known to hallucinate and easily so.

The first body is that of the **old man**, found somewhere far West of town:

Kiri: "It was the body of an older person. Details were not ascertained."
CCB0022

"Details were not ascertained" = Miki told Kiri she found a body as the two were hanging around, which convinced Kiri that Taichi was a murderer – or at least, that the people couldn't be trusted – and probably didn't even have

to rush her to get over there and do this. Kiri might never have gotten anywhere near close to where Miki says she saw the body[clxxxviii].

As to *why* she would do this things get more complex, what with how that rooftop scene is not simple to make fit in this interpretation (and I suspect it's never intended to fully fit). If Miki is Unreset, she has the excuse of knowing Taichi would go crazy; if she isn't, things are not as obvious.

That urgent shout of “kill that person”, with said person never clearly indicated, is ominous for someone who should not know in depth what's going on at that moment even if taking the time loop on its face. However, Miki and Taichi have been playing their game for long before the time loop, so not all the details and rules are known; not to mention who knows what, who knows that the other knows and what, and at what level.

The next person to be seen dead by anyone but Taichi is the first person to die in the Miki route, **Youko**. This one is the simplest of the lot, mostly because the location of Youko's death is hard to see: it's night, Kiri is standing at a distance with a flashlight, refuses to come closer, and the body is hidden.

All she is likely to see is Taichi with a knife in hand, or rather, Taichi and *something* glinting off the flashlight. The reason she thinks there's a body would therefore be that Miki told her; that's why she came back in the first place, as her behavior is otherwise nonsensical. Taichi then confirms that there's something *wrong* there, and that's all it takes.

Notice Kiri *never* mentions who the victim would be, or even the gender: it's Taichi that uses the word “her” first. In later scripts she will imply she knows it's Youko, but by then she would have had enough from Miki (explicit or implicit) to conclude that.

Kiri's reaction is also completely absurd: *"Well, we witnessed a murder. There's a guy with a knife like right behind us. I'm sure nothing's gonna happen if we, the only witnesses, just up and walk away, shining this big flashlight on the way."* Absurd, but in character: this really cements Kiri as

either a complete idiot, or as someone who ultimately doesn't buy this in the absolute slightest.

Regardless, there's plenty to believe she has not seen this body.

Next comes the "second" **Touko** death, having been stabbed by an ornate dagger, perhaps a paper cutter[clxxxix]. Rinse and repeat: Miki said she saw it, and on hearing that, Kiri stomped off to confront Taichi without so much as a blink in between.

This is interesting because Taichi sees it, but Miki can't well have stabbed Touko, who is just sleeping. Explanation is easy: as the two are playing the same game, what Miki says goes. Same wavelength. And when Taichi says pulling out the dagger would bring her back to life, he is, as mentioned, not kidding.

In fact, it's so likely that Kiri has never seen the alleged body that there's something even more strange: Touko has been "stabbed" with a bladed weapon procured on-site, but Kiri saw Taichi with a weapon of his own.

While Kiri might rationalize that Touko being off in her bedroom counts as "hiding the body", something that Taichi would possibly have interest in doing, the weapon would have been perhaps too suspicious even for her.

Misato's body is never mentioned by anyone but Taichi. It's hinted that Kiri saw **Tomoki**'s body, but she's been waiting for a chance to attack him for a whole day by then, and it's purely Taichi's conjecture that she does see it. Miki never mentions it, despite being creepily propped up right next to Taichi when she goes to him at the end of the route.

Given that Misato does come by around when Tomoki is wrecking the antenna in her Sendback, what would have happened is that Misato surprised Tomoki as he was wrecking the antenna, they had a big fight, and then they both left, leaving the antenna as it is. If Misato is rebuilding the antenna every week, and Tomoki wrecking it the same, then this has to have happened eventually.

Even more interesting considering that Misato's fall down the fence is a replay of Yutaka's suicide, and Touko's stabbing very much reminds her suicide attempt in Taichi's past. All of these are patterned against events that have happened in Taichi's past in some form, except Tomoki's and Youko's, which don't seem to have anything in common with anything.

...or do they? It's worth keeping in mind.

The last two bodies are **Sakuraba**'s and **Kiri**'s. Sakuraba is not dead, not that it changes anything:

Miki: "What do you think happened to Sakuraba-senpai?"
Taichi: "I've set him as dead in my Settings. Inside of me."
CCC4025

He uses the literal word Settei here, of all things. And although things are more complex than the obvious[exc], if Taichi can "set" Sakuraba dead, then he can do so for everyone else and so can Miki.

As for what happens to Kiri at the end, well, we're told: she's “dealt with” with appropriate measures, and the two of them are a Pair – if not Alter Egos certainly close friends, and as seen even in the ending – so they wouldn't really fight over this overmuch.

In this case, as she's learned Taichi is innocent, she's sent home by a still domineering Miki to reflect on her actions. For the time being, the Game is over for her; she's playing along more than enough for this to work.

This would explain why her cadaver is never seen or heard of again after that talk with Miki, another very suspicious oddity.

Everything here has been fairly straightforwards, except for one thing: *why is Youko playing dead at the hokora, and staying "dead" for the rest of the week*?

The answer to that is actually the simplest of all.

V.IV.III.V The Tower of Friends

Trolls reach Gainax levels when it comes to the Another Story scenario, Cross †' Channel, informally known as Tower of Friends. This scenario is a tough one to understand, as most of it is hallucination on top of edited hallucinations as well as flashbacks; the rest is so highly allegorical that it will require examination at the deepest layers of Cross Channel[cxci].

First thing to remember is that this scenario was originally an alternate (and likely failure) scenario to the Miki route, and despite *looking* like it's set in another world, it's very much not the case. This is blatant in Miki's behavior, which shows how the two are playing their game:

Miki: "Uhm... by the way, it looks like you didn't use Kiri-chin as materials, so... where's she?"
[...]
Suddenly, I realized:
Kiri was over there. She can't be seen from Miki, she's in a part in the rear.
It's bent and folded here and there but we can say it's still Kiri.
It's After-Kiri, though.
But Miki is an alien therefore there's no need to speak of this, I thought.
CCZAS

The size of the Tower of Friends may only be visible in the Xbox 360 version and this reconstruction, where it's half the size of the antenna, but its size is irrelevant because it's made of exactly six people – *and she doesn't see Kiri?*

This is the Shimura Phenomenon: she doesn't have the same image of this Tower as Taichi does. It's a communicative impossibility that goes deeper than the ones they already have. In fact, him "suddenly" realizing means that Taichi *himself* didn't have that image of the tower, and changed it on the fly.

This non-communicated last-second change belongs more to a childish playground pretend game than the comparatively refined 98 Game. If this is what Taichi starts doing when he goes too deep into his delusions, it may just be part of why Miki finds the whole thing hollow in the end. Even if,

unlike an actual child, he doesn't do that just to make himself win whatever happens.

Now, that this is still the Miki route is shown Miki's behavior on this scenario: she claims to "hold herself precious" but she's not running away immediately from this crazy Taichi because of her love for him.

If this is supposed to be far in the past, or rather, a different world, how comes she coincidentally acts *exactly* as she would if this were in that part of the story? It's clear that whatever is going on, we're still firmly in the Miki route and in “our” world.

Look at this bizarre and blatant contradiction:

Alone in this school building, I head outside.
I feel there's someone in the direction of the town.
[...]
Target caught in the corridor. I become silent.
CCZAS

These lines are nearly one after the other, there's no him going out of the building and back in.

This leads into the odd conflations of cause, effect and metaphor here. In the corridor, Taichi would sneak up on Miki and slash at her tendons, making it harder for her to move. This not only matches what Misato did to Tomoki and what Yutaka has, but also what Miki *herself* had done just the previous scene: collapse and be unable to walk. That is, until she got spooked, then she bolted normally – and the parallel with Tomoki continues, considering what he does at the very very end of the Misato Sendback route.

This oddity matches the incoherence between the first “day”, the one that imitates a fairly standard eroge, and the second “day”, which has Taichi still talking like he's in an eroge, but murdering everyone as they fail to understand a word he's saying. But if there's no tower and no killings, what is actually going on?

This begins with the very beginning of the story, which is the Training Camp: the basic storyline of this scenario is that of its aftermath. Consider this:

Several days we passed with reciprocal words absent.
Conversation was still possible in single encounters apart from the rest,
but when multiple, estranged human relationships overlapped, the
atmosphere was terrible.
This time, I had borrowed Mimi-senpai's strength.
Because of this, what I lost went as far as Senpai's trust.
CCC0002

There it is, in the last line: he lost Misato's trust. He says elsewhere that he drove her away, and looking close at some of the lines when he goes to the rooftop, there's odd lines that in retrospect signify exactly this – that he hurt Misato first and foremost.

And that's why Misato is up on that ridge, being *chased* and *cornered* by Taichi, who doesn't listen to a word she's saying and hurts her badly. There's the key: this is a metaphor for what he's done to the people at the Camp and outside.

This key is further strengthened considering this very important line:

Misato: "Peke-kuuun...!"
CCC0002

Misato is the one who calls to Taichi at about the exact moment he is about to "enter the Cross World", meaning that the one who makes him look back and include the rest is Misato – the same who called him out at first, so it's a repeat within a repeat.

Meanwhile, right near the end of Another Story:

???[cxcii]: "Are you alright, Peke-kun?"
CCZAS

He says he's *ascending* the mountain, but consider the sequence: he goes to the hokora immediately after this, meets Nanaka, then wishes for everyone to just vanish... and then he “switches worlds”, including what he says to be the embodiment of eight presences.

He then runs away so as not to see those people, to cower at “home”, which in this scenario is actually a field possibly to the West of time – after all, insects live out in the country, don't they.

This is a direct 1:1 parallel to the events at the end of the Training Camp; it's so perfect, only that “eight presences” is in any way an element of disturbance. Oh, the troll isn't even that, it's much bigger:

The sound of seven pairs of footsteps was the entire world.
CCB0001

How could Taichi have looked back and seen *all* of the Club, when Youko was – as ninjas do – *not in sight?* For now, let's just say that what he's seeing is the remaining seven plus Nanaka; he said presence, and she does have a presence, even if she happens to be a hallucination. This will require more examining for sure.

So that was the conclusion of Another Story: the same conclusion as the Training Camp. It follows that the main trunk of AS is the Camp itself. We've already seen Taichi hurt Misato; next he will dispose of Touko, stab Sakuraba and Tomoki in the back (does it get more of a betrayal than that?), run down Kiri (including talks of that doll, we'll see way more on that), and strangle Youko.

The building of a tower seems off of this, except thanks to the new Youko route bad end we now know what this symbolizes, at least at this relatively low level: that's the culmination of the Shinkawa massacre, including taking Yutaka for a tour. And since Miki here is Yutaka:

Taichi: "Help, now... you did say that, but... that time, well..."
Taichi: "Miki was still alive..."

CCZAS

...*there* we get to a nice little detail, a very very very oblique admission of how painful Yutaka's death was. Because the one dead among his friends at the Camp was Yutaka, after all, and that is where this mess really hit its stride. The failure of the Camp was just a formality after what happened between the two of them.

There's the chain of overlaps: Taichi is in the Miki route, *something* unknown (and likely unknowable) caused him to relive the failure of the Training Camp, which got patterned over by the Shinkawa massacre.

All of this is replayed by Taichi more or less in real time, with appropriate edits and expansions: the difference between the first two “days” is the attempt (and failure) to use a Fixed Pattern, which works the first time and fails here; this also allows for Miki's “return” and his interactions with her.

With this somewhat clarified, we can dive into the specific oddities and interesting tidbits of the scenario itself, given how most apply to the Miki route at the very least.

First let's look at the complex crucifixion of Miki. If Taichi is seeing her as Yutaka, then what he is doing to her is what he believes he did to him: nothing short of a crucifixion, a ritualistic and savage murder.

On the other hand, Miki's reactions are way too subdued for someone getting repeatedly stabbed; the loudest scream she makes is for when she is knocked to the ground, for the rest, she does little more than moan. This is inconsistent with the Miki seen crying her heart out in the beach scene at what turns out to be a tiny little cut.

This can be easily understood by taking it as nothing more than an extension of their usual corridor plays. This time he got more than a bit rough, stabbings or not, as he's far too lost in his own delusion. Miki, however, still plays along: maybe she really can't react, but I suspect thing about *love* means she doesn't run away even when Taichi acts like this.

The likelihood there's no actual stabbings increases with this:

Miki appears unable to grasp the current condition of her feet.
I dare say that the origin of that is some sort of Implant. Make no mistake.
No, the origin is rebound. Definitely.
CCZAS

He first uses her status as "alien" to justify her apparent inability to understand she's being stabbed. This is ridiculous, which is why he'd then 'correct' himself. But what he's referring to with this "rebound" is not of simple interpretation; the simplest explanation is that he's referring to *himself* .

The reason she doesn't feel anything appropriate to what he would be doing to her is that he's not doing to her what he thinks he's doing; the reason he thinks he's doing what he's doing has to do with his psychological status, which indeed is *rebounding*. And we go back to the main trunk of the explanation for Another Story.

And then, Miki smacks him with a baton:

A heavy impact on the side of the head, enough that the center of the brain could come out.
CCZAS

...right in the spot where he says his pretentiousness generator is! Not just in the pre-credits finale, by the way, but all the way from the first week:

Eating them in a single gulp is the way of the killjoy.
Wait, eating?
Taichi: "Come now! Go back inside!"
I strike at my temporal lobe.
CCA0015

This further suggests that this Miki here is aware of certain characteristics of Taichi, as well as a warning: the scenario after that point should be taken even *more* carefully.

If everything up until then was a barely understandable chain of overlapping hallucinations and conflated memories, what's after that may be even less real than that. And conveniently enough, that smack comes *just* before he delivers the final stabs at Miki, meaning that even if any happen before that, the ones that finish the job are very unlikely to.

Next, let's head into the heart of things: this Taichi B crossing over into the world with the parallel eight of the Club. There's many problems there make this idea untenable.

Even taking the parallel universes seriously, there's *no way* that the Cross World is this World', or World B, where this guy lived. Some things do look like they match: World B had the characters going to school while World A would've had them at the training camp, and that would explain the Sakakibara diary claiming people are disappearing in the middle of Summer.

The timeline still doesn't match since the end of vacation can't have been more than one week or so earlier; assuming that the World A Gunjou does have a somewhat long vacation period, the diary has 11 entries *and* the first one says that disappearances began a month earlier. So the diary claims that people have been disappearing during July *regardless.*

Next, the Cross World has notes in the Tasaki store from when they went to camp: even if that was Taichi B, in a moment of half-lucidity, somehow posting them up in other people's names, which is ridiculous at best, he would still have matched what people did get.

There's been some oddities seen with Taichi seemingly not recognizing the writing in his diaries immediately, but surely someone would've been bothered by seeing notes written in somebody else's writing and signed by them?

Not the last of which Touko, who definitely went to Tasaki on the last night of Camp to get water, and of course Taichi.

Let's even put that down to a writing error, no need to fanwank around every last detail.

Next error is tougher to account for:

Kiri: "What is this doll from?"
Taichi: "Dunno... it's some doll. Something from an anime maybe?"
Kiri: "...I do not know."
Kiri: "But it resembles you a bit, Senpai... look!"
Taichi: "It looks like me? It does? But for starters, my hair isn't white at all!"
CCZAS

If Taichi's hair got white during the murder of the Shinkawas (not that he isn't misremembering it) then his not having white hair means he has *not* committed those murders. If he hasn't, then he hasn't been sent to Gunjou and, most importantly, has *no* reason whatsoever to be an insane murderous psychopath. In fact, this entire psychotic episode has no trigger that's seen or hinted about.

It's possible this is just him being insane, but there's an easy way to make this make sense which ties back to the main trunk of the plot: as the building of the Tower of Friends is nothing but a replay of the Shinkawa Massacre with changed victims, that first day was a replay of what went on *before* the massacre, or rather, before the Shinkawas at all: a stereotyped, dull, plastic-fake daily life. A rather trite slice-of-life eroge well represents this.

Then comes the darkness, then comes the massacre. His white hair would come after *that*. And once more the question of Kiri and the Taichi Doll...

Later on, this allegedly different Taichi mentions (offhand) the vanishment of mankind, which makes little sense given how everybody had started vanishing long before (at least a month), but no one in the school seems to act all that different. Taichi may have started killing everyone, but everyone was still at school and pretty much where they would be expected to be found. This still doesn't match the Sakakibara diary.

Also, the time compression begins *before* the complete disappearance of mankind, as seen with his meeting with Sakakibara:

Obeying instinct, I replenished fluids alone, but... my heart, by now, long since had its layout damaged.
[...]
I parted my parched lower lip from the parched top lip and spoke to him.
[...]
I turned around, and no one was there.
CCZAS

These lines should all take place within instants of one another. Except his lips are dry what should be moments after saying he drank something: he's stood there for who knows how long, and Sakakibara likely left because he was unresponsive. Teachers, as Taichi mentions, are not likely to respect or understand the rules with which to interact with the people at Gunjou.

And then, the discrepancy of how Sakakibara is *not* at school where Miki says he was killed, and yet no mention in the diary of this meeting. The suggestion is that Sakakibara would have been taken while talking to Taichi, but given the time discrepancy, that's not the case.

All of the above can be given a more or less strong counter-argument, but the antenna is a simply irresolvable problem. Where did it come from, where does the Tower of Friends go, and why does the latter replace the former entirely? This simply does not match World B as seen until then.

If approached metaphorically and considering Worlds A and B as nothing more than part of Taichi's game, the solution is trivial; Taichi simply stopped hallucinating the Tower itself. In fact, there's plenty of parallels to see between the Antenna and the Tower, well beyond the space they occupy on the rooftop.

The Tower of Friends was built over the *wreckage* (literal) of Taichi's friends, and was then destroyed by Miki; the Antenna is built via the

wreckage (lateral) of Taichi's friendships, and is only sometimes destroyed by Tomoki.

Tomoki wrecks the Antenna to get Misato to stop escaping; he is wrong as all it does is get them into a fight and give Misato another reason to start building the antenna, as well as unintentionally aiding Taichi in his Game.

Even if Tomoki doesn't do it every single week/day, as soon as Taichi sees Misato building the antenna right after clearing up the wreckage and ordering new parts, you can *bet* he's going to go paramnesiac right there and then. After all, Tomoki is in a flight of his own.

It remains that Tomoki's intentions are ultimately sincere, and therefore the parallel with Miki ought hold; she burned down the Tower of Friends to help Taichi stop with whatever it was that was happening, similarly to how Misato smacks him upside the head as early as the first week when he enters a “Weird State”.

This not only fits her behavior throughout, but fits the Tomoki parallel even stronger: right after seeing the antenna her feet start hurting, psychologically there but later on allegedly literally because Taichi slashes at her: that is *possibly* what Misato did to her brother, meaning that the problematic antenna-building of Taichi's must parallel Misato's very own, with all that entails – including the irony of it being *her* that smacks *him*, when with Misato it's the opposite.

This would also begin to approach the reason Taichi sees Miki when she should have been dead, which is another unsolvable inconsistency given she doesn't seem to be much surprised at being there, or alive, or even at what Taichi is doing. As for the impossibility to understand the respective language, that will have to wait.

V.IV.III.V.I The Curse of Mikaka

A few brief notes on the nature of this curse are necessary.

There are many ways of inputting Japanese text, which being far different from Western text requires a more complex input system. The more

common is an IME, which sort of works like a predictive text input system on a non-keyboard cellphone, but the one relevant here is the Kana Keyboard.

The Kana Keyboard has both kana and Western letters on the keys, so it's possible to write kana directly with it. The Curse of Mikaka is what happens when the input is incorrectly switched, and one types Japanese script with the keyboard set up to output in Western text.

The name itself, *Mikaka*, comes from the NTT, the Nippon Telegraph and Telephone: when NTT is typed on a Kana keyboard set up to output Kana, what comes out is みかか Mikaka.

This is what the original text for Miki in Another Story looks like:

美希「PYF[E……っ!」
* 先輩……っ!
CCZAS

What she is saying is "Senpai...!", but since Miki's keyboard is set to Western characters, what comes out is "PYF[E". (That っ is a *glottal stop* and does not count as a character proper; it's a formalized noise that is of little to no relevance in English.)

Because this loses what little sense it already has once the actual Japanese is translated, what I did in the translation is to reverse the procedure: I translated the text first, set the Google Japanese IME to simulate a Kana keyboard, and retyped the text.

Senpai in Western character comes out as といみせちに – unfortunately, as the engine does not handle kana display, I also had to romanize it. Therefore:

Miki: "Toimisachini...!"
* "Senpai...!"
CCZAS

Of interesting note, while here the text has to appear next to the corrupted text, the Xbox 360 edition only has the corrupt text on screen; readers have to go to the backlog to read what she is saying, as well as listen to the uncorrupt voices, which exist for every corrupt line.

A little touch of meta that is unfortunately lost due to this excessively old engine, but I believe the meta gained in the necessity of the translation itself more than make up for it.

V.IV.III.VI Whose Blood Is It In The Corridor?

And so we come to this other long-running mystery: the blood in the corridor that Miki would be cleaning all the way from the first route. It's something that has a few oddities in and around it, starting with how Taichi can't *smell* the blood. He should be able to, after all, he's a 'dog' with a very good sense of smell. That's how he detects Youko who's been dead over three days.

Yet, when it comes to the blood in the corridor, nothing. This can be chalked up to the Settei not having progressed to that point, but it also opens up the possibility that it is not blood at all. Certainly, in the first week, Miki manages to clean it all up fairly quick for it to be dried up blood. That stuff is not easy to get rid of, and that goes more so for the amount there should be if this were to be the death of Miki in Another Story: Taichi stabbed Miki until she *bled to death*, his explicit intention to "drain the blood".

Another big oddity: it disappears leaving no trace. It stays there until about the Kiri route, after which Miki mentions it offhand once at the end of her route, claiming it is Sakakibara's, and she isn't seen cleaning it in the Youko route, nor is it ever mentioned again.

Not even in the ending, which is particularly strange: if the blood was there *before* the loop, then it should be in the corridor still if no one is there to clean it up. This is one weird plot point to just up and drop.

So whose blood would it be?

- **It's Sakakibara's.**
  This is according to Miki, and absolutely no one else. It's said in a scene that's highly suspect in many ways, from oddities in timeline well before it starts to how Miki taking a reset means nothing of what it looks like. Another Story directly contradicts this.
- **It's Miki's.**
  This is according to Another Story. But plenty still doesn't make sense; Taichi mentions "dried-up" blood in that scenario, but given he doesn't explicitly say that there is blood *there on the ground*, it may well be a non-sequitur. Not the first or the last time this trick is played. Plus, it's only been three days. And then, why did the body vanish from the Cross World while the blood remained, and *only* the blood? Why would this phenomenon take cadavers as well?
- **It's red paint.**
  As she says in the second week. She doesn't have much reason to be dishonest *there*, does she?
- **It's Kiri's.**
  She's having leakages, this is known. Miki can clean it so easily because there's no more than a few drops of it. Yes, it's kinda disgusting, but Kiri's menses don't really play much of a part in the story, except for a possible explanation for why Kiri is so damn crabby at that point, as well as a joke at Taichi's expense, who keeps saying *Touko* is crabby due to Time of the Month, when it's not Touko's but Kiri's. Wrong tsundere, idiot!
- **It's Hiroshi from Family Project 's .**
  Nobody likes that putz. Hmmm, where did I hear that first name again...
- **It's hopefully not Chris' blood.**
  That wouldn't be the first Resident Evil reference, nor the first zombie reference at the absolute very least[cxciii]. RE did take place in September 1998, and come to think of it, we never really have anything more than a theory as to whose blood it was in that early sequence either. This actually reinforces the theory that it's a reference, in a sense:

This is the kind of a mansion where you'd just see some zombies popping out, isn't it.

CCC3021

> And it would also explains why Taichi gives Miki a lockpick: after all, between Kiri and Taichi, she's certainly a Miki sandwich [cxciv] .

Jokes and half-jokes aside, the door is far from closed on this; but this time, there's nothing further to examine in the future[cxcv]: the most plausible one of these would be the paint. There's actually one last alternative: there isn't anything at all. Taichi will see whatever Miki tells him anyway, so there's no need to; the mystery would then be why she's in the corridor playing cleaning lady outside of meta-references to Nasuverse (and To Heart) characters.

Simplest answer would be that she's actively waiting for Taichi to come to play: cleaning is just a past-time for another past-time. Provided she's cleaning at all, given her thing about the underwear it's odd she'd be playing cleaning lady *at school* but she wouldn't do laundry at home.

This might expand a little more:

Miki: "Ah, yes, things are a bit dirty lately."
Miki: "Me, ah' like 'em clean."
CCA0008

That sounds like she's not cleaning the corridor, but cleaning up Taichi's perverted act; maybe it's just a joke at his expense, but maybe this can go all the way into the meta. After all, what is she doing throughout but trying to help him?

Regardless, Taichi was perhaps not completely wrong when he offhandedly mentioned in the diary that cleaning is to her sort of what the antenna is to Misato. And with her "murder" in Another Story, there the story goes around once more.

V.IV.IV Taichi's Rampancy

The reason why Miki takes the role of the master manipulator, she says, is because Taichi has a tendency of going on *rampages*. This behavior of hers has multiple issues and inconsistencies, one of which concerns Kiri. How does this:

Miki: "I might die but... you two, you can't be fighting anymore... ngh..."
[...]
Miki: "Oh whatever, you two get along already!"
She cried.
[...]
Miki: "I'd be nice if someday you would succeed in properly reconciling with Kiri-chin and be able to sexually harass---"
CCA0015

reconcile with this:

Miki: "...to flip Kiri-chin's switch."
Miki: "To make Kiri-chin try to kill you, Senpai."
Taichi: "...Miki..."
Miki: "Ah, I don't dislike you, Senpai, you know?"
Miki: "Just... it's because you are dangerous."
CCC4021

While it's narratively correct for the Dragon to fight the Hero, there would be something very wrong with Miki's priorities if that was all it was. Likely, she believes that forcing some sort of confrontation with Kiri would resolve things.

She's not too wide of the mark: Taichi *is* avoiding escalating the conflict with Kiri, in the sense seen in Kiri's route. By refusing to talk about Yutaka, and instead continuing with his asshole act, Taichi is ensuring his feud with her will continue endlessly.

However, if Kiri escalates it can and will end with her neurotic, as seen in the Miki route. Whether Miki understands all the details of this and at what level is difficult to tell, as it often is with regards to what characters know and what they know that they know.

Whether she does or not, she's using Kiri to attempt to divert Taichi's attention when he goes on a rampage, and we now get to the issue of what

precisely what they'd mean in a world without a loop and therefore without murders.

Readers don't really ever see Taichi rampaging. Another Story was a multi-layered troll of reliving a re-patterning, a hallucinated flashback of a hallucination; the bad end of the Youko route has other severely unclear aspects to it, and many overlaps with the same.

Even stranger the Miki route: despite there being *nothing* in the text that would even suggest that Taichi is going crazy in violent ways, Miki claims that Taichi went on a rampage in that route:

Miki: "But you had gone rampant, Senpai, so I thought you had lost your rationality."
CCC4021

and

Taichi: "Why did you keep me alive then?"
Miki: "...hmmm, somehow or other the rampancy[cxcvi] seems to have quieted... after that."
CCC4022

Now, Taichi certainly came close to snapping when Kiri started insulting him artlessly, in a scene mentioned multiple times; then again, an annoying idiot with a personal vendetta and a crossbow who's just tried to kill him; it doesn't take deep analysis or a particular understanding of the human animal to see why he'd want to toss her off the building.

So, either Miki is wrong (whether honestly or dishonestly) about the rampage, or Taichi rampaging doesn't quite mean what it seems to. Let's examine more on this, starting from Miki's own diagnosis of Taichi:

Miki: "Because you come with two settings, Senpai, Sexual Harassment Mode and Nice Guy Mode. Eheh'ryh!"
CCA0009A

The absence of *mass murderer mode* is fairly conspicuous; even considering Miki is far less likely than Kiri to talk smack at Taichi's face, she's not exactly known to mince words when the time comes.

The possibility certainly remains that Taichi *could* go murder crazy, but without the time loop to fix things, that's simply not something that can be accounted for. On the other hand, readers are shown several times Taichi either *hallucinating* going murder crazy, or having *suicidal and borderline suicidal delusions.*

And this is where the problems with rampaging being *murderous* start to be visible.

His entire depressive/emo routine is about finding a world where he can't hurt anyone; one of the choices is to eat an arrow, performing Suicide by Kiri; right at the end, when he ends up alone, he starts going delusional, he starts having delusions about more or less attacking the memories of the people he was in, and finds himself having *barely stopped his suicide* in time.

Since his delusions are *suicidal*, not homicidal, it's fair to conclude that his Rampaging is exactly this, which readers *do* see: his projections of his own depressive fears of being or becoming a murderer, more or less patterned against deaths he sometimes (possibly) perpetrated, sometimes simply witnessed, on the people around him.

In short, his rampancy is about losing himself in the game and hallucinating deaths, a violent if imaginary discarding of the people around him. That's part of why the murderer in Miki's route would be sheer coincidence[cxcvii], and not someone else – not even the “Taichi B” that would've been in the alternate route, had that been included in the main story.

None of this automatically makes him innocent of *all* killings, nor does it make it impossible for him to act on these hallucinations should he break far enough; but committing actual murders is not in his *inclination*. This easily fits into Nice Guy Mode.

In the game of chance and likelihoods, Taichi's Rampages are by far more likely to involve him having self-critical delusions of being a mass murderer in order to lower his personal barriers to suicide or at least death, a fate he believes merits.

This plays into Taichi's character: all the death he has witnessed, all the death he has caused, he first and foremost *regrets*. And so Miki wanting to avoid Taichi's rampages is her wanting to avoid this part of him, and much of what she does to him should be considered as her trying to help him with this.

V.V True Mr. Exposition: Sakuraba Hiroshi

Sakuraba: "Not Cross Channel, but Cross†Channel is better." (reading does not change)[cxcviii]
CCA0030

As hinted at the opening of the monograph, Sakuraba may not look like a character that would play an important part in the story but he is instead one of the most prolific sources of reading keys, above and beyond Miki or other characters, as neither Miki nor Sakuraba are the only key-givers. But where Miki mostly hints at Taichi's 98 Game and Misato hints at some deep thematic concepts, Sakuraba speaks of the deepest and most philosophical aspects of Cross Channel as a story.

The problem is that he's also the hardest character to understand:

Sakuraba: "In the thousand-to-one chance we are being monitored, they will not understand the meaning for it is encrypted with multiple ciphers."
[...]
Taichi: "The hell we'd be doing by sending an SOS without a message you can understand!"
CCC3028

That's a fairly good description of Tanaka's own approach to writing, as well, and his are some of the most secured reading keys. The thing about peanuts and seeds of persimmon should sound familiar, as well as incomprehensible outside of the joke. To truly 'get' Sakuraba, the easiest

way is ~~the back road~~ ~~the back street~~ ~~****ing double entendres~~ the indirect way: first getting to the deepest points, then working back to understand his codes.

If that sounds like it basically defeats the purpose, well, that's exactly what it is.

This *code* is where Sakuraba's approach to the "fall" of Mankind would be found: he's playing Taichi's game as well, in a sense, but only because Taichi is actually taking part in a much larger game, one hinted at in the Miki route, and in which Sakuraba taps directly.

V.V.I Even Sneezes Matter

A necessity to use alternate routes with regards to Sakuraba doesn't mean there's nothing that can be seen right off the bat ~~hee hee~~ in some apparently random scenes and events.

Let's see what appears to be a random meeting with Sakuraba on the way to school in the Kiri route, from script file **CCC0025** (quotes from there except noted).

I often met with Yusa-chan on this road.

It begins with a callback to Yusa, which then transitions into the meeting with Sakuraba. This is intentional, given what happens later. The first chat quickly moved to curry bread:

Sakuraba: "Readying for first period class."
Taichi: "...is the subject curry bread perhaps?"
Sakuraba: "Until that day when curry bread itself has finally passed."

That last line should actually be fairly shocking: that's a take on the *very last line* of the VN! We've already seen that the curry bread in the cafeteria hints that something is very inconsistent between the routes, and the curry bread will require far more analysis for the simple joke it may appear. For example, in that big diary entry in the first week:

Who was it that first took the curry out of the curry bread and ate that with rice?
CCA0015C

Of course Sakuraba hates actual curry, or so he says, but the reference to *curry bread* is the lock that only opens with Sakuraba as a reading key ~~if you know what I mean~~, as otherwise it's the single most overwrought stream-of-consciousness pile of steaming idiocy in the entire VN.

Returning to the script, that thing about classes being about eating was already touched upon by Taichi way back in the Touko route, so there's another connection:

Taichi: "Therefore, first period class is on croquette bread."
CCB2010

Back to the scene, after more dialogue, we have the big one:

Sakuraba: "Heh-cks!"
Taichi: "Hexagon?!"

This is another non-random thing, as it will be called back in a later passage:

Hexagons in number beyond count blanket the world. Each and every one of those is a heart.
They absolutely must be of the same size.
They absolutely must be of the same shape.
If they are not so... they will be made to bear the external pressure themselves.
Normally, that is intolerable.
The moment it becomes tolerable,
it becomes a monster that day and night lusts insatiably for the hurt and the destruction of all that surrounds it until nothing is left.
CCD1001B

This is a fairly complex metaphor for the difficult road trodden between the *need* for others to grow oneself and the need to fit within an organization of humans, with specific emphasis on the strict categorization and squaring-pegs-for-square-holes attitude of the Japanese culture, of which this figures as a criticism.

Not much of the humorous there, in short, and yet like the last line of the story it's as if Sakuraba anticipated it long before much like the thing about cats and the Kiri bathroom scene.

This concept of expanding hearts, paradoxically as it may seem, plays right into what happens next: a nearly beat-for-beat repeat of the Yusa snot bridge incident. There are three differences: how Taichi takes it, how Sakuraba takes it, and the highlighting of the meaning of the otherwise irrelevant sound effect of Sakuraba's sneeze.

Taichi takes it pretty poorly. This would be normal, all things considered, but it's further evidence of his hypocrisy: like Taichi treats Sakuraba comparatively well but rejects Yutaka for similar crimes, here Taichi ~~manhandles~~ mistreats Sakuraba for doing the same thing as Yusa, who he treated nicely.

Sakuraba is mostly unfazed, mostly because of his personality, but he ultimately seems to enjoy this:

> Sakuraba: "Once more I managed to make a memory with you."

It is repeatedly stated that this kind of *gentle hurting* is not a problem between people, and for all of Taichi's protestations, he has no problems ~~"matching needles" fnarr fnarr~~ doing this kind of thing ~~with to with dammit~~ around Sakuraba - hence the thing about *hearts*. This is also why Taichi is so (pretending to be) upset that Sakuraba would call him *buddy* at the end of his Sendback route.

The third part is the sneeze itself, and this is a reading key, a hint to go back to the original Yusa scene and examine the sound effect there carefully:

Yusa: "Bwakhaah!"
CCA0013

The original is ぐじゅん gujun, in kanji 愚純, and means "stupid, dumb" (here translated as a 'baka'-like thing, which should be about as unlikely). Not only is it pretty much the ultimate in the kind of troll that the Japanese native are *never* going to ever look at, but it's a pretty major hint that will help find out what exactly happened between Yusa and Taichi, which is of course no simple open and shut case.

And finally, there's the change that comes during the Youko route, where Taichi avoids the sneeze:

Sakuraba: "Yo."
Taichi: "Here."
I handed him a surgical mask.
Sakuraba: "O.K."
He put it on, not one doubt or question.
CCD0025

Is this *avoidance* of interaction, then? Likely not: Sakuraba has pretty much no reaction to Taichi's order, but unlike Youko (and this is *one* reading key), Sakuraba is not conflict-avoidant. This isn't the immediate capitulation of someone who tries to reject all dissent, only to then use that as an excuse to do what they want in the first place.

Instead:

Sakuraba: "...is it OK if I take off the mask?"
CCD0025

Sakuraba's is something far more pure: *trust*. So there's still interaction; interaction with it's thrust that indicates what the meaning of curry bread is, big solid loaves filled with juicy [unspeakable error]

V.V.II The Sakuraba Bike Incident

As I was *totally* saying just a few words ago, one of the perhaps most puzzling parts of the very opening of Cross Channel is an extended retelling of an anecdote involving Sakuraba. Although its relevance is impossible to see for a first time reader and difficult even later[excix], this anecdote details important aspects of Sakuraba's personality and relationship to Taichi.

It starts with Sakuraba riding a bike:

Sakuraba: 『I will prove myself by conquering the peak with this new bike.

Because... I think that's what I need to do for my sake, right now.』

CCA0002

Considering the Earth-shattering revelation in the very last end of the penisious chapter, it's not surprising that Mad Taichi in Another Story would use this line nearly word for word. We'll see even more when we consider the Driving vs. Biking metaphor: consider how Taichi has little difficulties riding a bike, trailer and all, with a cargo and multiple times in a row, or stealthily following Kiri with one, at night, in a supposedly perfectly silent city – but can't drive at all.

While to everyone it sounded like Sakuraba was just taking his bike for a ride on the dead-end road on the West side of the town, he had in fact biked for perhaps days straight towards a neighboring city, had a breakdown, and was on the way back when he was found by the police, who had been warned by his parents.

This is the first unexpected parallel with Taichi's backstory: the servant who had grabbed his tortured wife and run had been brought back in a similar amount of time, around three days. That may also hint as to why Taichi and Youko don't run for it (although it doesn't explain why Youko didn't do that *before* the Shinkawas).

The next thing he does is blurt out at the school newspaper that he discovered some alien base occupied by soldiers, which makes him the laughingstock of the school. Setting aside the oddity of *anyone* in Gunjou being able to act that normal, what happened is that Sakuraba walked off

the beaten path, discovered something that is kept fairly out of sight but is an integral part of what makes Kamisaka what it is, and erroneously thought he'd found something far more incredible.

In other words, it's sort of how Taichi walks off the beaten path and discovers that Kamisaka, which is deserted in the day, is *actually deserted during the day*.

The resulting ridicule, which lasted for many days, eventually got to him; And then:

On the morning of the eighth day, he attended school with nonchalance on his face (inquiries on this were made by the paper)...
...and his hair dyed the color of gold (they became material for a special report with man on the street pros-and-cons interviews).
Ever since then, the guy's lived the blond life.
He overcame the stress by imposing his self with the deluded belief that he'd become anew, definitely.
...however, that's also how we came to be known as the Gold-Silver Pair.
CCA0002

He overcame his psychological problem by *dying his hair*. Now, we're repeatedly assured that's not the case for Taichi (at least technically), but the process that got Sakuraba his hair color was nearly identical. Ridicule for many days:

I was ridiculed by all.
I kept being ridiculed, and for so many weeks,
I continued to take their attacks.
CCC3025

Then seven days pass where something happens physically to him:

The killer's skills that exist inside of me were also constructed in the span of a week.
CCX0001

And then, his hair color changes:

The pigment in my hair was lost via yelling.
CCX0001

This whole apparently irrelevant anecdote is a near 1:1 parallel of Taichi's own backstory. And that's why it goes in that place in the narrative, in a sense.

V.V.III And Then Sakuraba Was a Zombie ~THE END~

Sakuraba is said to be a masochist, and thus capable of taking a lot of damage – but technically, so is Taichi. Yet Tanaka goes way above the call of duty to demonstrate the *absurd* level of punishment that Sakuraba can take:

A kick flew.
With intent to kill.
Sakuraba: "...hu!"
I lopped off his medulla oblungata. Sakuraba tumbled down like a branch chopped off.
CCB2010

This comes right after a scene where Taichi finds Sakuraba crouched over, munching on *something* as a scare chord plays. I strongly suspect this is a replay of the iconic first zombie scene in Resident Evil, as noted it wouldn't be the first reference. Regardless, there's something about *zombies* here, as obvious exaggerations aside, what Taichi would be doing there is decapitation – and that's how you typically kill zombies.

It's far from the only zombie reference; some have been already shown, and some are more or less serious than others, but there's also this:

Like in that masterpiece music video thriller from some years ago, I lose my mind as I perform a full-body reproduction of a certain talented dancer[cc].
CCB2014

The specifics of “Lolicon is a Disease” Kurosu Taichi yet admirer of Michael Jackson and imitating the zombies from the Thriller video I leave for the reader to ponder.

And speaking of The King of Pop: there's that thing about robots (see Misato) and what I suspect is a very thorough misinterpretation Taichi has regarding the status of Jackson as a robot in the music movie *Moonwalker* at the end of the Shimura Phenomenon lunch in the Kiri Sendback route which also reminds of a conflation between the Tin Man from the Wizard of Oz and a type of robot called “buriki” that seems generic but I can't source more on which in turn goes back to how Jackson is described as a Mild Robot which looks suspiciously like R.O.B. from the NES or is it viceversa and I would draw a conclusion from all this outside of *because Cross Channel* but it would be wiser to back away slowly and avoid eye contact with the entire subject before we're treated with a run-on four hour barely-comprehensible tale that might be completely made-up but that will be told loud enough that everyone in the tavern we somehow are will hear to a mixed feeling of pity and schadenfreude.

V.VI Who Was At Fault? Doujima Yusa

Beyond even Miyuki and Sakuraba, Yusa appears as one of the least important characters in the whole story, and in most senses she is: her only use would be to demonstrate how Taichi is actually really really bad and prone to doing really bad things.

Given all that's gone so far, those events are immediately suspicious and greatly interesting to examine.

Being that very little is seen or heard of her, it's no easy task to show that events have not gone quite as Taichi thinks they have, and only building on the many hints, interpretative keys and tiny little details can a very different picture than the expected be painted.

For example, this scene:

> The head of the pretty girl looks up to my approaching face.
> I draw near to five centimeters of distance, and whisper:

Taichi: "Let's get married."
CCA0020

I *suspect* she takes this seriously, but regardless, her reaction is not quite right:

Yusa-chan froze.
For about one minute, there was not the faintest of stirs.
The hiccups stopped.
Yusa: "Ah, uhm, now?"
Taichi: "Well, first of all come inside."
Yusa: "But, now?"
Taichi: "Please, make yourself at home!"
Yusa: "...now, what just happened now...?"
CCA0020

Yusa stops for around a minute, and then drops a hint that she has somehow forgotten what has just happened. This reminds of Taichi, for starters, and very much not a random joke of any sort.

And if we're on the subject of really odd reaction, there's how the scene where Taichi pushes down Yusa ends:

I was looking down on a squatting little girl disgustingly vomiting her guts out, a conclusion of inferior quality that I grew bored of.
CCD0021

Stopping as soon as the potential victim is saying no, really *really* saying no, then harrumphing and all but complaining about the certain sourness of these grapes just out of reach is *not* the reaction of a ferocious beast driven by hunger and with no concern for its victims.

It's already easy to suspect that things are nowhere near as straightforwards as they seem.

V.VI.I What Experiment?/II

As seen all throughout, Taichi deludes himself more than a little when it comes to the hows and whys he interacts with people, whether people reject him and why, as well as pretty much everything around that.

With Touko (and, he implies, with Miki), he made up that he was having this sort of “experiment” thing with her, where he pretended he was manipulating her to see whether he could fake his way through a more or less normal life.

With Touko that was just his way of rationalizing away his having fallen for someone manipulative and controlling, which ended with him blindsided and attempting to revert things he had done, as that was the only way he knew to deal with things. Similarly here: Taichi tried to trick and deceive Yusa by being – the dastardly devil! - *nice* to her.

Certainly, I'm taking care of her quite proactively.
Or should I say, I'm trying to make her fall for me. Experimentally.
Because, I thought, if she received gentle attention from the time of youth, then that 'minus' that is my appearance could be mitigated.
CCA0020

There's no need for particularly deep analysis to see that Taichi does indeed have an unhealthy obsession with how he *looks* to others; continuing with the idea that the first week may in fact be more honest rather than less, the way he comments on this plan is with a fair level of unseriousness:

The Super Was Hikari Genji Truly All Satisfied Smiles Experiment, as I call my plan, has presently assembled sufficient data to produce a judgment of 'favorable'.
As to how I hadn't given much thought what to do after a success, I realized it just now.
CCA0020

The image of a dog catching a car and wondering what to do with it well represents this behavior.

So, if with Touko we had someone far from perfect and shared blame of what happened with Taichi, then Yusa's behavior requires a similar examination, only made harder because, as said, there's little we see of her.

Because she's most often and most extensively seen in Misato's route, parallels with Misato are interesting to examine. Taichi seems to agree:

No good, her specs are not much different from Miyasumi-senpai!
CCA0027

Because Yusa shares what *should* be a characteristic of Misato, her ditziness and inability to 'read' sexually-charged situations, and they also both have glasses, this parallel seems to hold; but whether Misato is an actual ditz is not actually easy to say.

As seen with her analysis, Misato does seem to understand – and ridicule – Taichi's sexualized behavior, but this of her is inconsistent. Whether she does this because she understands and forgives (if not always without prior punishment) or because this understanding exists at a level she's not conscious of is difficult to conclude, and in this case not very relevant.

If Yusa were to have this same ability as Misato, it would immediately explain what caused her to sneeze "idiot!" while creating the snot bridge: an understanding of what Taichi was just doing. That's why she would have vomited, then:

Taichi: "But the reason that girl hated me was not because I was hiding ugliness."
Taichi: "It's just that that ugliness was rejected by her very biology."
CCD1001B

A *physiological reaction* would then be what needs to be looked for and examined when it comes to Yusa. The sneeze was already mentioned, but there's a third. Yusa visits Taichi's house at night and sees him in a kimono:

Yusa: "Well, the hair is indeed giving it some white and... it suits you, I think."

Taichi: "But still, dark hair is the best with a kimono."
A bitter smile rises to surface.
Taichi: "Wouldn't it'd fit you a lot better, Yusa-chan?"
Yusa: "B-, but it's... hic!"
On the downbeat of her raising her voice, out came a hiccup.
CCA0020

A sneeze. A hiccup. Vomit. These are all physiological reactions, compatible with the idea that Taichi expressed. But that very line reminds that Taichi does not quite understand what his ugliness is, if anything; was what Yusa reacted to truly what he thinks it is? Let's see them one at a time.

This is what Taichi was doing before the sneeze:

- accepted the diary from Yusa;
- claimed he would take what she wrote seriously;
- remembered (and regretted) about how he made Miki too clever;
- promised himself to make things go "better" this time;
- used the too-complex-for-her word fräulein, which he then attempted to explain away;
- dried her nonexistent tears, repeated another explanation for fräulein, moved back.

That last part seems the obviously suspicious one, as he put his hands on her and for a fairly creepy-ish reason, but this theory doesn't survive application to the other event. What Taichi was doing before the hiccups:

- opened the door in a kimono;
- was told by Yusa it fits him, with a comment on his hair;
- told Yusa it'd look better on someone with darker hair.

Taichi never touches her here. What he *does* just before she gets them is talk about his hair, which he very obviously resents. Similar to what Taichi was doing here, in the sneeze scene, just before touching, there's his use of an erroneous, miscalibrated word to revert himself from the regret of what happened with Miki and his diversion into this ultimately creepy self-promise of doing better.

So on one hand we have Taichi wobbling on his masquerade, but that's only his side. In the hiccups scene, Yusa sounds all but sincere about the kimono fitting him. It's not *necessarily* dishonest, but the way she reflexively fires this off sounds at least forced:

Yusa: "Uhm, it suits you."
Taichi: "Really?"
Yusa: "Well, the hair is indeed giving it some white and... it suits you, I think."
CCA0020

What's worse, it sounds *reflexively* forced, as if she was used to doing this kind of things. Well, she's young, she's sort of impressionable, she's very socially awkward, and around a Senpai she might even like, but there's much more that casts suspicion on this simplistic interpretation. In the sneeze scene:

Yusa: "Taichi-san, couldn't I entrust you with this?"
[...]
Taichi: "Yeah! I'll do it!"
I shout with both fists thrust in the air.
Yusa: "..."
Taichi: "What's the problem, little girl?"
Yusa: "Ah, eh, uhm... is this alright? You don't want to think on this more?"
Taichi: "Unnecessary."
Yusa: "So quickly..."
CCA0013

Yusa here is *stunned* at Taichi wanting to do this with little encouragement from her. This behavior of hers continues after the hiccups scene:

Yusa: "Uhm, it's that today would be my birthday."
[...]
Yusa: "So then, here... a birthday present!"
CCA0020

It's *her* birthday, and she's coming to Taichi's house basically the last possible moment to get back the exchange diary with a gift[cci] to appease him. This flies entirely over Taichi's head, who never pays it heed, but this is not how one normally behaves.

And more, further down:

Yusa: "Ta-, Taichi-san, I believe you don't know about when I was a child..."
Taichi: "What are you saying, you will be so many years after this being told that!"
CCA0020

Is she just being awkward, or is she actually *terrified* at the idea of Taichi knowing about her past? Because the latter would fit the pattern that's emerging here: Yusa is unused at being treated nicely, to the point it leaves her stunned to have anyone act even just decently towards her.

There's this resentfulness due to having been bullied some time ago.
CCA0013

Indeed, and there would seem to be hints at long-standing damage here. As well as strong suspicions of dishonesty:

Taichi: "You fitting in at school?"
Yusa: "Well, a bit."
Taichi: "Bullying?"
Yusa: "None there is none! I'm so lucky!"
[...]
Yusa: "...everybody in my class gives it all they have, so they can have fun with me!"
[...]
Yusa: "Mommy's also always trying to help me."
[...]
Yusa: "The teacher had us do exchange diaries..."
[...]

Taichi: "Me, I didn't really find anyone in my class, so I did it with someone from a higher grade."
Yusa: "Ah, I did not find anyone either!"
[...]
Yusa: "We are an odd number in class."
Taichi: "Ahhh... so, how about the teacher?"
Yusa: "No, see, it is this here."
CCA0013

Her answer to whether she fits at school is wavering, but when it comes to bullying she is quick and direct. That line about "everybody giving it all", in this context, sounds suspiciously like "everyone is doing their best to deride me".

And then, she failed to find anyone with which to do the exchange diary because the class is odd numbers, which is not an explanation but a dodge: anyone *else* could have been left out, but instead it was her.

Then there's this in the hiccups scene, which we've already partially seen:

Taichi: "You fitting in well at school?"
Yusa: "That question... you just ask me that every time, right Taichi-san?"
CCA0020

This certainly shows that Taichi is prone to cyclically repeating the same behavioral patterns, but she's also artfully *dodging the question*.

And finally, the mention of her mother, which is where things start coming to a point. First of all, her mother is a big influence in her life, beyond the obvious fat jokes, as she's described as having never met her father.

So let's talk Yusa's mother: loud, obese, and known to abuse her position as cafeteria lady to give Taichi (who hangs around her daughter) a ridiculously over the top amount of food – really, why does a school cafeteria even *have* a crab in the cafeteria[ccii]?

In that scene, she not only feeds him enough that he would seriously risk obesity if he were to eat all that routinely, but *everybody* in the cafeteria hears him getting served that much food. And they whisper. They rush to conclusions, but since Taichi *is* being favored, it's not a wholly incorrect conclusion.

As the high school where Taichi goes and the junior high where Yusa goes are the same building, it's virtually guaranteed that someone in her class at least heard of this and likely other easy to ridicule behaviors of the mother's, and given what happened to Sakuraba, those in Gunjou may be unable to really construct a real dialogue but they seem to be at least capable of finding ways of ridiculing and belittling others.

Taichi is well aware of this, possibly all the way to suspecting that she is still being bullied:

Taichi: "But... me, that girl, that girl that was always bullied... even knowing all that... I once pushed her down."
CCD1001B

Since she has prior cases of bullying it's not certain he *does* know, but there's very much grounds to say he suspects so, especially considering what he did to her, as we'll see in the next chapter[cciii].

And Yusa is learning this overfeeding behavior:

Yusa: "I thought I would give him this curry bread."
Seems like she was going to feed the wild animal to train it to human contact.
CCA0013

It's an ingratiating gift of course, but it's specifically *food*.

In fact, it's reasonable to conclude that Yusa herself may be getting overfed at home. And if her being overfed is something that ties directly to her mother, which is at least a partial source for her being bullied, then her

having *vomiting* as a reaction when attacked is relevant: vomiting is a blatant physiological rejection of this overfeeding.

The ejection of snot, the hiccups, and the vomiting all form a single concept of *ejecting what's inside*. That may sound a negative behavior, but consider everything: Yusa is being *stuffed*. Showing what's inside is something extraordinarily rare for her.

What's inside coming to the surface is therefore to be interpreted as her facade being broken. This is confirmed by how Taichi's *own* is compared to vomiting:

I had a seizure.
Taichi: "Cut it out now! Cut it out cut it out!"
Fortunately the fit was small, so there was no danger of it scattering my rationality.
In exchange for the chills of swallowing acid reflux, its head is imprisoned back in the hellish abyss.
CCA0004

He's not even alone: Misato feels sick to the stomach when she sees people not getting along, Miki copies that, and when Touko eats too fast after refusing food for so long, she also nearly throws up. Food-related reaction is surprisingly common around the characters' ultramarines, and that's even without getting to how common eating disorders are around here.

And as with Taichi's inside coming to the surface, so Yusa's inside comes outwards, with the conclusion that if Yusa's Inside is coming out the moment Taichi's Inside does the same, then there's a perfect match of behaviors.

This is where things get complicated even by the standards set so far by Cross Channel.

V.VI.II Taichi and Yusa: Who Was at Fault?

First difficulty is to determine whether what Yusa is doing is a true rejection or not, i.e. *intended* as a negative thing for her to do, either by her or the

story. One doesn't show the deepest interior unless severely frustrated *or* comfortable.

The vomit may seem an obvious rejection, but the sneeze is much more complex: to construct the snot bridge she would have needed to sneeze *at* him and *without* covering her mouth with her hand, meaning it smacks of intentionality.

That's certainly fairly disgusting, and yet, the lucky presence of the bridge is a very blatant symbol of *connection*. That Sakuraba would also do this further strengthens the unlikely positive aspect of this, so there's much more to examine before coming to a conclusion.

Let's look at Taichi. Taichi is a human pretending he's an animal pretending he's a human, while deluded he is an animal pretending to be a human; his deception goes one layer deeper than he thinks (see the rest of the story for more examples).

And so, when he showed the animal he was *not* showing his true side. It not being his true side, however, doesn't make it entirely false, for it is the true face *of his facade*.

Following along so far?

Let's look at Yusa. In *actions*, Yusa is someone who can't imagine herself being treated well by anyone, and she's awkward at best in her typical interactions. *Why?* This is never directly known, but thankfully with Yusa the metaphor is blatant: she believes herself filled with *something disgusting* which comes out at inopportune times.

But the sneeze (and the Sakuraba replay) betrays that this is a facade: when that *something* comes out, it *still* tries to construct a connection of sorts. This is the exact description that Taichi used for the automatism, which is worth quoting again:

Taichi: "That's why... it's possible that even if you love... you will end up breaking."

Rather, in proportion to the interest given,
there is a want to touch with fingertips that have turned blades.
CCD1001B

Fingertips turned blades, or in this case, fingers turned disgusting snot. And that's the meaning of the sneeze being "idiot!": she doesn't want him to get involved with her, because she believes herself Too Horrendous for him.

But this does nothing except show that Yusa *does* care for Taichi, and probably at the most sincere of levels possible for someone that young.

Therefore, Yusa is someone who at least *believes* herself full of horrible things, horrible things that come out at inopportune times, and simultaneously try to create a connection with others: her and Taichi are far more similar than it may appear at first or even second and third look.

The sneeze can be fairly closely compared to the Kiri Bathroom scene, for example. That's also Taichi's worst side coming to light, but looking close and underneath the event, what he was trying to do was not simplistically evil.

Given all the parallels, it's evident that Yusa isn't *actually* filled with horrible things, and that she has a facade one layer deeper than that: in other words, she is closely comparable to Taichi.

But Taichi never ever realizes this, and it's very likely Yusa never realizes this either, at least consciously: begin Cross-Communication.

With the sneeze, Yusa effectively puts Taichi to a test: if he had reacted to Yusa as he reacted to Sakuraba doing it, their relationship would've changed - possibly ended. Whether this is a conscious thing of Yusa's or not, that is similar to what happened with Touko: while he believes to be the only Evil Monster messing with and manipulating others, he's actually being messed with *back*.

However, Taichi's hypocrisy with regards to Sakuraba also happened with Yutaka, and that ended badly; that's the hint of what happened with Yusa as

well, unfortunately.

This concept of *hidden test* finally explains the hiccups scene: she's showing herself *again*, and instead of being annoyed at her hiccuping her way through that visit, as she would've have, *he proposes marriage*.

He did it just to shock her out of the hiccups, and it worked; the problem is that if it was a test, then indeed Taichi passed with flying colors. That happens just before the "Super Hikari Genji..." line: indeed she's head over heels for him... in fact, it's easy to hypothesize that at least one part of Yusa takes Taichi's marriage proposal *very very seriously*[cciv].

And this is the lead-in to the real deal: Taichi shows his not-real-but-believed-real side. Does Yusa *consciously* know what that is? Impossible to tell, but with all the above, it's damn near certain she *subconsciously* does, and this is proven by how she does the very exact same.

Being that the deepest source of what fills her with Bad Things is her mother, likely source of bullying and overfeeding, vomiting is as deep as her facade is going to go. In short, *you show yours, I'll show mine.*

Except this time, Taichi stops:

I was looking down on a squatting little girl disgustingly vomiting her guts out, a conclusion of inferior quality that I grew bored of.
CCD0021

He stops, and for all his sour graping, he sounds genuinely disgusted by this. There is rejection indeed, but it's rejection on *his* side first. Unsurprisingly, it ends up matched on *her* side. What damage he might have done with this rejection to Yusa is unknowable. She might never recover from this.

Unless, that radio... but that's certainly not this story.

And so the relationship between Yusa and Taichi becomes "clearer" as a complicated stream of similarities and overlaps, where true intent and deceit

are inverted at conscious and unconscious levels, where no one is aware of what's happening and which ends in tragedy for all involved.

V.VI.III To Make Alter Egos

There's one more thing to explore on the subject of Yusa: regardless of intent, what triggered Taichi to try to push her down? As there's pretty much nothing in Cross Channel that is actually random, and Taichi in particular is very much like a trained dog with his stimulus -> response, something should have happened that made him do what he did.

And Yusa is not the first nor the last time he acted like this: the Kiri bathroom scene would be another suspiciously similar event.

The questions are three: *what event is he patterning this off? What triggered it?* and *what does he hope to accomplish with this?* The answers are close to each other:

Without answering the asked question she shortened the distance between herself and me.
And then, very naturally, pushed me down on the bed.
[…]
Girl: "Everyday, painful?"
CCC0000

No words, pushed down, and then asked a question. He answers straight away, but not everyone does:

Taichi: "Even now, painful?"
[…]
Taichi: "...you will answer my question."
[…]
Taichi: "Answer."
[…]
Taichi: "If you answer I'll go."
CCC3022

That he'd be insistent shouldn't come as a surprise: a pattern that requires two people can't well be repeated if the other side doesn't follow it. Although there's a direct connection with the leaking blood, as in she helped him with some and he's returning the favor, in a way broken as it may be, Taichi still repeats the whole thing Youko did to him: compare the two scenes, the equivalencies are fairly obvious.

As for what he's trying to accomplish, it's been strongly suggested considering just how much he wants to replace Yutaka in Kiri's life, but that still leads back to Youko:

Girl: "Taichi, we are weak."
[...]
Girl: "That's why we just must join our forces."
Taichi: "Forces?"
Girl: "One heart, one body. Alter egos."
Taichi: "Alter egos..."
Girl: "If we do that, then we will be able to stand the pain just a bit more."
CCC0000

The goal is, indeed, the construction of Alter Egos.

But not only are the Alter Egos certain to crumble, or rather, be impossible on their face, the way he's approaching this is complete insanity. This is the pattern that he repeats most frequently, even more than the visions of mass murder, and the one who taught *both* to him was Youko: little wonder she's the closest to a villain that the VN has.

In fact, given the way he applies this to other, it's easy to conclude that what Youko did to Taichi was nothing short of rape.

This passage gets more than a little creepy, considering the above:

A hand so like a crown-of-thorns starfish greedily devouring coral somewhere in Okinawa struck my shoulder with a loud smack.
The weight of about two unloaded freight trucks pushed me down to the floor.

CCA0022

A *monster* of a hand *pushes him down* to the floor. But it's no random creepy/funny parallel with another character, as can be seen looking at Youko herself: she retrained Taichi after he 'crashed', according to his own words, and is therefore very much a *mother figure* to him in the sense that she raised him, even if this seems to have involved playing RPGs and eroge[ccv].

This ties straight back to how Yusa's mother is overfeeding her, filling her with garbage and certainly not helping her with her problem - even outside the bullying that's going to come from her behavior at Gunjou.

As for what caused *Youko* to do that, considering how quickly she falls head over heels when Taichi so much as treats her even remotely decently, that may be all that was needed: he didn't pretend she didn't exist. She therefore would have had a similar thing to Yusa's, once more showing a strong parallel between unlikely characters.

And Yusa might well grow up to be like Youko after this, a terrifying prospect if there ever was one.

However, back on the subject at hand, it's necessary to find what caused Taichi to repeat that behavior with Yusa; as he works on stimulus -> response, then first of all it's necessary to find what he associates Youko's rape with, as any repetition of events similar to those would constitute the stimulus via paramnesia.

In the time prior to him being subjected to Youko's Alter Egos contract, two major events happened: he was being bullied, and he had seen the sadistic torture and murder of a servant couple. These are the triggers that cause Taichi to attempt to repeat this pattern, as they are straight there behind both the Yusa and the Kiri scenes.

In fact, the bullying is there one way or the other with most characters, as they're essentially society's exiles, but with these two things are *literal*. Kiri was being bullied, and ironically by Youko:

Voice shakes.
I couldn't look at her.
Because she was immature an immature girl, and yet so like a beautiful glass sculpture.
Because she had this fragility, that to touch was to make her filthy, and to grip was to shatter her.
But what to do with something this... half-baked.
I feel resentment towards Youko-chan.
CCC3015

Although writing spiteful remarks on her house is really *really* petty, that's still enough to put fear in her[ccvi]. Yusa was bullied, of course, although once more whether she's lying to Taichi and/or whether he knows that is unclear, but it still fits.

As for the dead body, in Kiri's case it's Touko. She may not be dead at all, but he thinks she is, and as with the bullying that's enough. Even right afterwards, when the talk suddenly turns to smell for some reason, things quickly turn to Touko:

Taichi: "And anyway, doesn't Touko wear the same clothes every day now?"
CCC3022

Even the way she looks at him:

A look in her eyes as if seeing an enemy.
CCC3022

...is described similar to how Touko looks at him:

She looks at me as if she's seeing the enemy of her entire family.
CCA0005A

Harder to tell is who died when it comes to Yusa, but there's actually a convenient death that was never really followed up in any *explicit* way:

Yutaka's. The story is not clear on when, exactly, Taichi did this to Yusa, but it's easy to guess considering everything: not long after Yutaka's suicide. Not impossible he did it on the exact same week – the exact same *day* – as the Kiri rooftop kiss.

It's very possible it was all not long after the beach scene, as the way he talks to Yusa right afterwards becomes kind of odd when read in this sense:

Taichi: "It's the strength of the cohesiveness of people close enough to eat out of the same pot. Are you jealous?"
Yusa: "Ah, yes, very much."
Taichi: "You'll soon find a group to join, too."
CCA0027

Kiri and Miki already have some kind of Alter Egos thing going on, but at that point Yutaka is not dead: the day of the Beach is the same day in which the antenna is brought in. This gives a fairly detailed timeline, in fact: that the beach is likely a Friday and Yutaka dies on Wednesday September 10th 1997, so accounting for the weekend that's about enough time to get to where the antenna was at the start of the story.

The Kiri kiss scene is said to be one week after Yutaka's death, and with this, very likely to be another attempt at Alter Egos: the death is Yutaka's, and the one that bullies Kiri would *still* be Yutaka, having a hold on her heart even from beyond the grave, something impermissible for Taichi given their history together and his inability to let the past go.

The Kiri kiss ends similarly to the Yusa event, too: Kiri pushes him off and walks away without a word. Him allowing that is *also* not the behavior of a monster that devours everything without a care.

Interesting to notice that *all* the attempts at Alter Egos are done with the one being bullied: is this Taichi subconsciously attempting to help the victims, as he couldn't help that servant couple? That's impossible to tell definitively, but the possibility is there.

However, with his pattern being completely and utterly broken, he failed and only managed to alienate both Kiri and Yusa at the same time.

The last thing to consider is why Kiri is in the Cross World and Yusa still isn't. The answer is actually in the conclusion of the Yusa relationship itself: because he ultimately was the one that rejected her. And so she stopped existing in his world, as well.

V.VII The Elusive Phantom, Hasekura Youko

The basic archetype for Youko is the kuudere, cold on the surface, warmer on the inside. The simple twist is that even her warmth is cold: even to Taichi, who is the only person she really interacts with, she is cold and impersonal, apparently incapable of showing any kind of real emotion.

That's not to say she's not technically capable of them, it's more like she never really learned to express herself around people, or how to interact with others. She tends to treat people like things or toys, which is part of her background as some sort of Living Doll, similar to Taichi or more.

The deeper twist is far more complex than with anyone else except perhaps Taichi. But first: apparently random and huge detour.

V.VII.I Facts and Puzzling Things About the Number Seven (and Eight)

Back in the late 1990s, a not-yet-famous Macintosh-oriented software developer named Bungie released a first person shooter called Marathon, which was followed by two sequels. It was notable for having a storyline that was far more in-depth than that of most first person shooters, and in fact, to this day, it's still deeper than most – definitely more difficult to understand.

By the time the third episode rolled around, there were alternate timelines, strong suspicions about the nature of the main character, more or less understandable philosophical ramblings, and a storyline with heavy emphasis on finding the “right” way out of this apparently unsolvable maze of crossed allegiances, forgotten cultures and universe-destroying beasts.

All told in a very complex and implicit matter, with very little in the way of explicit storytelling.

There's more than its share of parallels with Cross Channel; whether it's intentional, coincidental, or Tanaka and Greg Kirkpatrick simply happen to "drink from the same source" is both difficult to tell[ccvii] and only tangentially relevant.

What's to the point is that Marathon likes the number seven: it's hidden *everywhere*[ccviii]. And having read extensively on Marathon, as well as having played the series multiple times, that hunt sort of sticks with you.

More than the odd similarities in storytelling and storyline, the Seven Hunt is where we get to Cross Channel.

Cross Channel goes completely *crazy* with the number seven. Sometimes it's straightforwards, sometimes you have to make simple equivalencies, sometimes you have to count the letter inside the starting syllable, sometimes it's spread across multiple lines. There's math to do and there's digital roots to extract, as well.

Examples are so many they must be seen to be believed, and even a non-exhaustive list is *huge*.

We've actually seen several already, as they're often unavoidable and woven into the setting; from how the .108 ratio (8-1=**7**) means the world for Taichi moves nearly **seven** times faster, to how the SHI+MI of *Shi*mura/*Mi*sato makes **seven**.

The *possible* number of total days spent inside the loop was seen as 1**7**7**1**. First, to obtain that number I had approximated 6.*8* to **7** – here's the reason why that made sense. The number itself: 1+7 & 7+1 -> *88*, *8*+*8*=16 -> 1+6= **7**. Also look at the center and the extremes: 1+1=2[ccix] and **7**+**7**=14 -> 1+4=5 -> 2+5 = **7**. This is a very interesting number, regardless.

But the example from which this study should start is so big and so under everybody's nose (at least for those noses that know some Japanese) that it's easy to miss, and it's formulated in a way that hints why not only is the presence of *seven* important, but that it is going to be woven into the entire structure of the VN for a point: Taichi's mother is named Nanaka.
The kanji are seven and incense, but more than those, it's how the name can be read as the literal question, "nana ka", or, "**seven?**". "Zubaaaaaaan" is also written with **seven** As[ccx], just to compound this.

And now, let's just go down the storyline more or less in sequence and have a look:

The heart-felt intentionality of this aggression is inadequate. 25 points.
CCA0005A

2+5=**7**

This humble one, with regards to the both, whilst unable to be unfeeling of xxx (painted out via mosaic)'s volition of proud towering, the heavenlike mystery of the pair's equal endowment of xxxx by xxx in which approach the nose to kiss and xxxx's edge for which the unstinted love there together present xxx that xxxx with regards to the action to take xxx and at the end
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx is
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.
CCA0015C

Count the numbers of Xs in every group: 3 then 4=**7**; 3 then 4=**7**; 3 then 4=**7**; 3; 16 1+6=**7**; 46.
46 plus that loose 3 is 49, which is **7**x**7**. The sum total is *8*6 *8*+6=14=**7**x2.

****
Mi**********
Misato*****ke******n?*
Misato: "Pe**...***n?"
Misato: "Peke...*kun?"
Misato: "Peke... kun?"
CCA0016

That'd be *six* times: and that's why this line is so suspect, because it isn't a **seven**. But let's look at more of the same script:

Misato: "Sob, sob, sob."
[...]
Misato: "Sob, sob, sob, sob!"
CCA0016

Seven sobs...

Misato: "Peke-kun? Peke-kun?"
CCA0016

...then **seven**th time she says his name, and quickly an *eight*h. This line was what indicates Taichi has multiple layers of madness, so it's interesting there'd be an *eight* here...

Taichi: "...*8*4%"
CCA0022

Taichi's Conformity Coefficient. 100-*8*4=16 -> 1+6=**7**.

Taichi: "Hihihi."
Taichi: "Hihihihihi!"
Taichi: "Hiii hih hih hih hih hiii!!! (crying)"
CCA0023

That's exactly 14 = **7**x2 sobs (easier to see in the Japanese, unfortunately).

Taichi: "With size *8*6 C cup, this should be right."
CCA0026

8+6=14, which is 2x**7**. But! If C=3, we have 1**7** 1+**7**=*8*. That *eight* again...

Taichi: "These could only be the hills of Mother, two hills that for certain will make a strong founding stone for the developing eRoman Empire, such

that the neighboring countries shall tremble before its very name!"
CCB0002

Traditionally, there's one hill in Rome per each king, which numbered **seven**.

Taichi: "Nah, not at all. Hahahah! It feels like grateful emotions have arrived from the **Seven**th World."
Misato: "Somewhat freaky..."
CCB0005

We've already seen plenty of that SF, and this is the very first mention of Somewhat Freak: it comes in response to a **seven**.

After having flattened **seven** or *eight*, finally Touko takes a breather.
CCB2002

Seven, and that *eight* again. But is it **seven** or is it *eight*? Make up your mind, Taichi!

なっなっなっなっ？
Touko: "Wh-wh-wh-wh-?"
CCB2010

These are just mean. **Seven** is nana (specifically な), as even the tropes go, so what's she's saying is **se**-! **ven**-! **se**-! **ven**-!

な、な、なななななななな
Touko: "Wh-, Wh-, WhWhWhWhWhWhWh..."
CCB2012

But because that would be *easy*, Tanaka throws curveballs: this one is nana **seven** and then **seven** times “na”.

...she couldn't fit it all in.
*8*0%. No, about **7**0%?
More than enough to attain pleasure.

CCB2013

Think the sex scenes are safe? Not in the slightest! And again that *eight*, or is it **seven**? Taichi doesn't seem sure.

冬子「んっ、んっ、んっ、んっ、んっ、んっ……うぅん……んっ、んんんん」
Touko: "Nh, nh, nh, nh, nh, nh... nnngh... nh, nnnnh!"
CCB2013

That's **7**x んっ (nh)[ccxi].

*Eigh*ty percent in I hit the bottom.
Touko: "Awah... it got totally... full?"
CCB2013

...and again...

//冬子「……きぁ、あぁあぁぁぁぁぁあぁぁ～～～～～～っっっ」
Touko: "...kyah, aAahaaaahAaah～～～～～～!!!"
CCB2013
Small 'a' (ぁ) x**7**, total of large 'A' (あ) + small 'a' + tildes = 16 1+6=**7**

Touko: "～～～～～～～～!!!"
CCB2013
...but that's *8* ～...

Touko: "So, how do you think a banana is handled formally[ccxii]?"

But let's look at the katakana for banana: バナナ
katakana 'ha' (and ba) resemble very much the kanji 八 eight, with *vaguely* cross-shaped katakana na ナmakes nana, **seven**. And that *eight* keeps returning, doesn't it.

And I, as well, had just crossed into the *eight*-tenth of my limit.
CCB2101

...and returning...

BWAAAAAAAH!!!
[...]
BWOOOOOOO!!!
[…]
Taichi: "NNNNNNNH?!"
CCB2101

These are Taichi's reaction to being kissed after the sleep blowjob: **7**xA, **7**xO, **7**xN.

8) Long form SF novel Gaia's Voyage ～FIN～
CCB2020

It lasts **seven** sentences. And seems to be SF, as well as being SF.

14) Seriously Delicious RAISU has here its explosive birth.
CCB2020

Total is **7**x2 steps.

Kiri: "Approximately 30% or thereabouts."
Kiri: "It is an appropriate share."
CCB0022

Meaning they take **seven**ty percent. Indeed, appropriate.

An impossible distance,
as Nanaka was traveling right beside but three seconds ago.
Twenty meters. That is not a distance that can be traversed in an instant.
CCC0006A

20 meters in three seconds is about **7** meters per second.

Miki was emitting the aura of a protagonist of a shounen manga who in a brief span of training increased his strength **seven**fold.
CCC0016B

Some of them are really well hidden; pay very close attention at this one:

Whisper.
[...]
Kiri: "Please get on hands and knees and woof."
[...]
Taichi: "...woof."
[...]
Taichi: "Woof, woof woof woof!"
CCC0026

That's six times “woof” is used, *unless* one counts the unheard command from Miki, then it's **7**. We know that was the command, as just afterwards:

Miki: "Ask him, who toldja to bark four times."
[...]
Kiri: "Who told you to bark four times?"
CCC0026

But here they said “bark four times” twice, i.e. *8*.

Kiri: "AaAaAaaaAaaaah..."
CCC3002

Watch out for more tricks here! Forget the capitals (or fullwidth 'A's in the original), that's just 14=**7**x2 total 'a'.

Incidentally, with obligations to the resourceful Mutsumi-san, I receive about 20,000 yen monthly.
[...]
Sakuraba: "500,000."
CCC3019B

Taichi gets 2[0,000], Sakuraba 5[00,000] 2+5=**7**.

70% is about the limit. Any more and it'll be burdensome.

CCC3027

That's how much of Taichi Kiri can fit in her mouth. Again, sex scenes aren't immune.

霧「ぉ、ぉはょぅございます」
Kiri: "g-, gOOdmORnInG."
美希「『お』と『よ』と『う』と『い』が小さかった。もう一度！」
Miki: "The 'g', the 'd', the 'm' and the 'n' where too small. One more time!"
CCC4001

In the original that's o-yo-u-i, which converted through the Curse of Mikaka is 394E. E is the fifth letter of the alphabet, so it's 3+9+4+5 = 21 = **7**x3.

Rate of occurrence up to present has been just confirmed to be 15% or more.
My calculations say that once in **seven** times I will be struck with a Nasal Discharge Bridge.
CCD0012

This is interesting. You'd think “15% or more” would mean 16%, right? Nope, because one in *exactly* seven times would be around 14.3%, which can't be reasonably approximated to 15% or more. But let's say the *stated* **7** is actually rounded up, say, 6.6: this makes the ratio 15.15%, which is within parameters.

Think these are crazy? Check out Taichi making up this story about Misato in her Sendback route, script **CCD1001**:

While yet using the left hand to unfasten her necktie, three seconds later Senpai slants her right hand downwards at a 45 degree angle and inserts the index finger into the knot burying it up to the second knuckle in 0.62".

4+5+6+2=1**7->***8*, but look closer: 45 is 4 and 5; 4+3 (the seconds)=**7**, 5+2 (the knuckles)=**7**. The numbers 3 and 2 are even on the correct sides of the 4 and 5. The **seven** is harder to see than the *8*, but more abundant...

The strength of her hands working from opposites exceeds the friction power of the necktie, and a length of approximately 32 centimeters of the part that slides around the neck was withdrawn from the knot.

45 (the angle from above) + 32 (cm) = **77**

After that, via right hand in sequence the first button as well as the second button are unfastened in approximately two seconds, baring the breasts.

1 (button) + 2 (button) + 2 (second) = 5. Hmmm, that's odd, but... ahhh how could you miss that, of course that's actually **7**. Don't see it? You fail at having a perverted mind, dear reader[ccxiii].

At elapsed four point twenty-*eight* seconds the blouse goes, at elapsed **seven** point thirty-four seconds the skirt.

4+2+*8*=14=**7**x2 and 3+4=**7**, so first number is twice **seven** and second is **seven** twice. Also: **7**.34-4.2*8* = 3.14 mmmh pi.

[...]

Extending both arms horizontally, she migrated by approximately six meters fifty-three centimeters spinning towards the left side at the rate of one revolution per second.

CCD1001

1 (revolution)+6 (meters) = **7** ...which is harder to see than 5+3 (cm)=*8*. That was basically the entire scene!

Taichi: "Sleep! Sleep! Sleep!"
Taichi: "Sleep! Sleep! Sleep!"
Taichi: "Sleep! Sleep! Sleep!"
Taichi: "Sleep! Sleep! Sleep!"
Taichi: "Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep..."

CCX0001

1*8* + one set of 3 = **7**x3, while there's 4 sets of 3 'sleep' = **7**. No wonder he can't fall asleep with all this complicated math!

The ending, *Crossing*, consists of 25 lines, 2+5=**7**. Some splits to achieve this are fairly forced, so there's less in the actual ending video.

Taichi: "You can gain 300,000 friends throughout the country with just 15 minutes of training a day!"
CCZAS

Population of Japan in 1998 was 126,300,000 – number is pretty stable due to low birth numbers – meaning to win over Japan it'd take around 421 days 4+2+1=**7**.

These are nowhere near all of them, but the number of these alone is *astounding*.

So, what's the point here? So far, it all fits on the typical Rule of Seven and all its subtropes; but there's that creeping number *eight* that keeps cropping up. And not randomly, either; this all has a point.

Here's one from Sakuraba that begins showing us what that point would be:

#1 "Mystery" (x22)
#2 "Impact" (x19)
#3 "Discovery" (x1**7**)
#4 "Forbidden" (x6)
#5 "Hair-raising" (x4)
CCA0002

Summing the matching extremes, #1+#5 and #2+#4, with #3 standing on its own.

22+4=26 2+6=*8*
19+6=25 2+5=**7**
17-> 1+7=*8*

#1, #3 and #5 are first, center and last thing seen: they are the most likely to be stand out, or at least are easily considerable to be the extremes. (This

was actually slightly easier to see when they were split 3-2 across pages, now unnecessary.) They lead to *8*. The ones that are least likely to be noticed, #2 and #4, the insides, lead to **7**.

The **7** is hidden in the inside, in the place where people are least likely to look, where the rest will only see *8*. The only overt **seven** is where it would be, normally, be summed up to *eight*.

There's more semi-random eights all around.

The year of setting of 199*8*, but that's when the loop would take place. The year when Taichi had most of its happy memories was 199**7**[ccxiv].

Taichi: "Look at me pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeease!"
CCA0002

That's 32xE which is 4x*8*. There's with these a grand total of *8 8*s in this opening script of the story, however; *8*+*8*=16, 1+6=**7**. Easy to see *eight*, hard to see **seven**.

Miki, tab's running up.
When it's time for the bill, there'll be hell to pay here.
CCA0004

Her total thus far is 440 yen, 4+4+0=*8*. *Eight is hell to pay*. But in the next route she won't buy something, which will make the tab 660 yen, which I got nothing; but *8*-1 (the item she doesn't buy) would make things go to a **seven**.

Seh can uhnderstand meeh at eh nearly *8*0% rahteh! (Mexican accent)
CCA0006

*Eight*y percent is here associated with misunderstanding.

Taichi: "*8*0 yen was it?"
Tomoki: "Yep."
Taichi: "I shall be taking it, yes."

I drop coins into the proffered hand, and opened the provisions refrigerator.
Tomoki: "...uhm, but every coin here has the Shoushou-in engraved on it instead of the Byoudou-in...?"
CCA0007

Taichi uses *eight*y fake yen.

Today I went to school, but cut class.
Touko was extremely crabby and mean.
Must be that time of the month.
But it's not nice that she gets *eight* kinds of angry because of biology.
CCA0012

Original is 八つ当たり, which does just mean "outburst of anger", but it's got a nice 八 8 right there. Considering Touko has problems but it's *not* her period, at least that we see Taichi is just wrong on this, she'd get *eight* angry for some different reason.

Psst, psst...
[...]
Psst, psst...
[...]
Psst, psst, psst, psst...
CCA0022

Excluding the ones he uses as a verb[ccxv], that's *8* psst. Considering the rumors are possibly part of what causes Yusa to be bullied, that's not a good number to be associated with.

The same feelings of a 22 year old playboy that hasn't played enough and is now forced into a wedding due to an unplanned pregnancy.
CCB2005

That's no random number: 22 is what a 17 year old is in eroge years. And that's Taichi's age: 1+**7**=*8*.

Touko: "...two-timer... philanderer... breeding horse... perverted kappa... hentai... libertine... sex offender... nymphomaniac...!"
Taichi: "Ah, aaAaah..."
All my Erosins back at me!
CCB2019

His Erosins number *eight*.

A fresh line-up of seven faces.
But actually there were eight.
7/*8*, well, we should be OK, I thought.
CCB0001

And here we get to the real brunt of things: **seven** out of *eight*. And that **eight**h, in this case...

She's awkward even with me, her acquaintance of over ten years.
CCC0024

Since Taichi's 17, that means they've met when he was about **seven** years old and she was about *eight*. And now she's 1**8** (*8*-1=**7**).

Taichi: "Hah hah!"
CCC3022

That's Taichi's creepy laugh at Kiri in the toilet, originally ハハハッ. *Eight* as mentioned is 八, meaning this is twice *eight*. Which if you look closer is 16 → 1+6=**7**.

The desires that are multiplexing in me raise my Fad Chaser levels to 82%.
CCC0009

Let's have some more fun with Katakana that looks like kanji! “Fad chaser” is written ミーハー miihaa. Let's write the number 31*8*1 in kanji now: 三一八一. Should be pretty obvious even without knowledge of kanji.

Now:

3+1+8+1+8+2=23, if both those *8*s were **7**s, then this would be a nice 21 or **7**x3, but it looks like straightforwards won't work. And yet, that's still a hint: if only *8* were **7**...
3+1+8+1+82=95 → 9+5=14=**7**x2 – a bit better.

Thirty minutes later, I shut the safe.
[…]
Forty-five minutes later, I shut the safe.
[...]
One hour and twenty-seven minutes later,
CCC0023B

Last one is *8***7** minutes later. He spends 152 minutes total, 1+5+2=*8*. *Eight* is associated with too much time on porn[ccxvi].

Taichi: "Have you ever thought about how many kittens have died in agony on this Earth?"
CCC3022

This is Taichi's big crazy speech to Kiri. Five cats are born; six with the mother, and **seven** with the dog... except there needs to be a father for these kittens. That's **seven** cats total, plus an *eight*h interloper.

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CCD0022A

This is from the console version, so it's a later addition and even more interesting to study. Grand total of † is an odd **7**5, so there's more than the obvious. There's 6 sets, 5 of 12 and 1 of 15: there you go: 5+1+2=*8*, 1+1+5=**7**. Common is *8*, rare and easily missed is **7**; and the rare one is in the scene where more people than one or two seem to die.

Now, in the 5 “normal” sets only one person is killed except one, so that leaves *eight* people to die in the other set. But that's the one scene where the number of stabs went to **7**! What's going on?

And that's not the greatest strangeness; that last set of stabs should have been Yutaka, but he survived. So there should be four sets of 12: 4+1+2= **7** .

Eight and sevens are at odds here, and that's not counting that if Yutaka doesn't die, then what happened at the end?

Also interesting the number of sentences added. Per flashback: 7, 8, 8, 15, 33. The 15 sentence one is the one with the 15 crosses, where the math didn't add up. There are 14=**7**x2 full-screen text (NVL) sentences in the 33 one, therefore leaving 19 sentences, combined with the 15 that's 34... **7**. So the sequence is **7**, *8*, *8*, ?, **7**x2, with the one there left mysterious as it kind of is. Let's brute-force the correct number: if it were *8*, then the total would be 45, and nine isn't what we're looking for; but if it were **7**, then it'd be 44 4+4=8.

A seven would lead to eight.

Youko: "Princess carry."
Youko: "Princess carry."
Youko: "Princess carry."
Youko: "Princess carry."
Youko: "Princess carry."
Youko: "Princess carry."
Youko: "Bridal princess carry."
Taichi: "I can't do something you arrange in a way that makes its meaning incomprehensible."
CCD1001

She can't say the words "princess carry" **seven** times without *adding something strange* onto the last one, that doesn't quite fit and that Taichi can't understand. After all, the princess carry is automatically bridal[ccxvii].

Yu.

CCX0001

ゆ yu, which translates via the Curse of Mikaka to the number eight[ccxviii]. That's what he says when he starts cracking under pressure in the ending.

And finally, let's have Sakuraba ~~who's got reading keys up his ass show us whether he has something in his pocket or if he's just happy to see us~~:

8 x 100,000 yen gold coins commemorating the 60th year of the Shouwa Emperor on the Throne.
7 x 100,000 yen gold coins commemorating the enthronement of the Emperor.
2 x 50,000 yen gold coins commemorating the Wedding of His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince.
4 x 5,000 yen silver coins commemorating the International Garden and Greenery Exposition.
3 x 5,000 yen silver coins commemorating the Wedding of the Crown Prince.

CCC3019B

References are at this link, but the point is the *quantity*. We have:
15x100,000 yen
2x50,000 yen
7x5,000 yen
That's 1,635,000 yen total ($12,000 in 1998 dollars, 16,500 as of September 2013).

Of the 100k and 50k: 1+5+2=*8*, plus **7** of 5K yen ones.
Separation's easier to see in Japanese, where the former uses 万 man "ten thousand" and the latter use 千 sen "one thousand" as counter. So *8* is bigger and **7** is smaller, sure, but look at the total: the larger is 16 million 1+6=**7**, the smaller is 35 thousand 3+5=*8*. It's harder to see, but *seven beats eight*.

And now for what I believe to be the actual reading key for all this:

I showed him to the latrine.

Taichi: "Here is your room."
Sakuraba: "Inn'it small."
Taichi: "Because it's an eight tatami room."
Taichi: "It's a commonfolk's residence so that's how it is."
Taichi: "Your room's big, right? You sure your own home ain't better?"
Sakuraba: "Big you might say, but it's just around 16 tatami, so about twice this one."
Taichi: "16 tatami?!"
What sort of room is this idiot living in!
Sakuraba: "On first look it look like it should be at least twice, but... seems my room is unexpectedly small."
CCC3012B

With the reminder that in Japan[ccxix] toilet and bath area tend to be separate, so this has to be the tiny tiny room where only the actual toilet is. *Eight tatami* is absurd on its face: it's unlikely even Taichi's room is eight tatami, let alone the damn crapper. Now, Sakuraba's room is 16 tatami, which he certainly knew beforehand; so why did Taichi tell him that a 1-2 tatami room is actually 8?

Simple reason would be teasing, but let's see if that's all there is here.

As Sakuraba trusts Taichi, he must conclude that his 16 tatami room is far smaller than he thought it would be, and screw that it's obviously wrong. It's insane logic, but there's a method in it: 1+6=**7**. Taichi says *eight*, and Sakuraba agrees, but it's under everybody's eyes that it's actually something that, on close examination, is **seven**.

Even this aren't all of them[ccxx], but what remains is clear. *Eight is wrong, seven is right*. Eight is misunderstanding, eight is mathematically impossible, eight is bad rumors, eight is madness; *seven is correct*, seven is the question that Taichi's mother asks, seven is plausible, seven is mathematical correctness, seven is under everybody's nose if hidden.

The reading key is woven all the way throughout the story, relentlessly, at every corner, and it screams one thing only: *there is something that looks eight, but is in fact seven.*

V.VII.II The Case Against Youko

The currently untranslated Romeo Tanaka (then Yamada Hajime) Visual Novel Hoshizora Planet features a main cast of seven characters.
The members of the Family Project are seven.
Saihate no Ima says that the main group should be seven people in its own ad copy.

Setting aside Kana: Little Sister, which has a main cast much more difficult to quantify, Cross Channel is the lone exception of these early Visual Novels from the same author: it has *eight* characters in its main cast, as the rest are flashback characters plus the openly imaginary Nanaka.

The reading key is as strong as they get around here, and even quick comparison with the author's other products it's visible that something is very much off: one of the characters in Cross Channel that is thought real isn't, and the most likely candidate is Hasekura Youko. She's either an alternate personality of Taichi, possibly *always* was, and in-story she is never anything more than either some strange object Taichi believes real (and with which most people are playing along, more or less), or Taichi dressed in drag.

There are general hints that this is the case, but most importantly, *every single scene* in which Youko interacts with Taichi and someone else onscreen is extremely suspect: it'll be generally easy to prove that the interaction these characters have with Youko exists almost entirely inside the ambiguity of the text and the readers' expectations, with the rest not much more difficult to work around.

V.VII.III General Hints

The general hints are many, but they all follow a certain pattern: Taichi and Youko being reciprocally identifiable, and reciprocally identified by other characters as well. There's also several apparent dangling threads that are in fact nothing of the sort when read in this sense.

V.VII.III.I The Girl in the Mirror

The hints that Youko does not exist are woven throughout the story from the very first scene. In the opening scene of Cross Channel, Taichi is describing a girl he sees reflected in the glass; he asks who this girl could possibly ever be, and Youko – this is also confirmed by the voice file itself – answers that it's Taichi.

This is bizarre in how it's never followed up upon, theoretically; this is what comes right after the replay of this first scene in the opening of the Kiri's route:

The figure of the self reflected on the window sort of reminds of a girl.
Of course it does.
It's cross-dressed in women's clothing.
I had a roommate,
Hasekura Youko.
CCD0023

This makes it explicit that it's him cross-dressing, but look at the sequence: it goes straight from cross-dressing to Youko. That odd “figure of the self” is up there because the subject of this all is ambiguous, as it is in the very first scene.

There's also a contradiction in how the bedroom in the first part is described as grandiose, while the bedroom he shared with Youko was nothing of the sort. His cross-dressing itself is never really followed up upon either. He sometimes uses the girls' restroom, but when it's not to annoy Touko (end of first week) or follow Kiri (her route, the Miki route), there's no hint he uses it instinctively.

Why would he, even? Seems unlikely that the toilets at the Hasekura Mansion would be split by gender, and by Gunjou he's been away from cross-dressing long enough to “forget” about Yutaka. He does throw the odd girly verbal affectation, especially when under pressure, but they're so rare that they're tough to see even in the original Japanese.

It's interesting that not only Youko seems to answers Taichi's silent question in the opening, the concept of *Youko in the mirror* keeps being brought up.

Outside a 'vision' of her doll in the second week, which was added in the console version, and a brief cameo in a super-deformed CG, Youko first really appears in Week 3.

Outside those cameos, the place Youko is seen more often before that official debut is in a mirror. It's her very first appearance in the story:

In the mirror, she was reflected.
[...]
Taichi: "Youko-chan?"
CCA0030

Taichi looks at his own reflection, sees a girl, asks who that girl is, Youko answers with Taichi's name, Youko, who is only ever seen in mirrors until the third route. This is one of the bigger and oddest Chekhov's Guns in the story, on par with the cross-dressing – and yet it'd have no payoff.

And that's not considering how she's introduced in the Kiri and Miki routes: in the original version, she was 'there' in the former and assaulted him in bed in the latter; in the updated re-releases, in both cases Taichi hits his head shortly before seeing her.

V.VII.III.II Trope Overdosed

Similarities between the two, like the construction of smiles and general poker face, or her being into surveillance (for Taichi, though she knows a lot about everyone else) while he is into Wacchi, can be written off as the two having a shared backstory and her being sort of a mother figure to him.

Her being as ridiculously overtroped as he is, however, is not. The list of ridiculous feats isn't quite as extensive as Taichi's, but it's probably even more ridiculous:

- A grip on the level of an adult male.
- In fact, perfect genes that make her de-facto an adult *male* despite being an 18 year old *girl*.
- Able to 'get' the knack of anything instantly.

- Can dominate Taichi's orgasmic pleasure *without any practice*.
- Has a superhumanly long tongue.
- Trained in the use of firearms.
- Deadly in the use of bladed weapons.
- Has flashbangs on hand.
- Can appear and disappear at any time and at any place.
- Keeps everything under surveillance, using multiple computers.
- Makes money on stock trading.
  Taichi, conversely, lost a lot of money on Azuki bean speculation. Was this under Youko's advice? Like with Youko seemingly not knowing about MWI any more than Taichi, it would make her far from the genius she is sold as being.
- Reads three languages fluently.
- Trains daily, likely with a home gym.
- Can make candies, sandwiches, and other preserved food.
  They're delicious according to all who eat it, too.
- Skilled driver.
- Routinely flies to foreign countries to get training from military instructors.
  Are you even supposed to *read* that without laughing?
- Instant and perfect understanding of the hokora system.
  Read carefully, too: the first time Taichi finds the hokora, it's empty except for a note by Youko. That is so ridiculous it is all but impossible.
- Wants to take over the world.
  This makes the above two look sane:

  Youko: "He who is king of information is king of the world."

  Youko: "I live for the sake of becoming that."

CCD5001

- And, in general, she is a Super Ninja!

Sakuraba: "What sort of Ninja's that."

Taichi: "Sorta like Hyper Super, Mega Future..."

I explain via gesticulation.

Taichi: "A ninja that can in a single jump can, say, clear a wall around ten meters tall. Then, with Favored Sword * Kogarashimaru [ccxxi] , woosh-wooshing---"

Tomoki: "Slays the wicked magistrate?"
That's hackneyed and boring!
Taichi: "Nah."
Taichi: "Slays a girl raised in the town."
Tomoki: "That's a psychopath!"
CCA0030

And this all goes back all the way to the very first scene of the story: the very first word of Cross Channel is *saiko* . Read in kanji that means “oldest”, but in katakana, that is short for *psychopath* . This changes the meaning of the line, which can also be read as "the memories of a psychopath", and is a spoiler for something that will never be quite clear until nearly halfway through the story.

That's one of the reasons I had to render it somewhat creatively: it's not just Taichi's *recollections* that are too far gone, but also not Taichi alone.

It's also odd that Taichi would keep insisting that Cross Channel should be named after Youko, though if the two are the same, then there would be no change.

And finally, this little tidbit:

I made myself accept this by thinking that she had become as if a youkai, an apparition.
An essence-sucking demoness.
The punishment for the me who did not reject the forms of a woman.
CCC0000

Which begins to set up the question, *if she's not a real person, then what is she?*

V.VII.III.III Nanaka

Her name is *seven?* , as said, which is an interesting hint on its own, but Nanaka has being de-facto a hallucination of Taichi's going for her – though whether she is that or something more is not as certain. Regardless, no one else ever sees her, and one way or another she's not real.

Youko and Nanaka (and at times Taichi) have several things in common; first up:

Misato: "...if you suddenly get close to someone, of course their hearts will go all 'badum'!"
CCA0010

This line comes in the scene where Misato tells Taichi to *look in the mirror*, which made him go crazy in ways already seen. All very interesting, but it's the sneaking the point here. This is just what Youko does:

Taichi: "You know, could you please stop doing the shinobi act all the way up to people's backs without even a hint of presence?"
Youko: "..."
Taichi: "What would you do if you stopped my heart!"
CCB2011

and:

The instant she vanishes from the field of view, so her characteristic felt presence vanishes.
All indications of presence suppressed, all by her own.
That is just something she is capable of doing.
CCB2011

Or because those are *too* subtle:

Her figure vanishes,
her presence erases,
her existence disappears.
One of the movement techniques this elusive phantom possesses lets her achieve the sudden materialization at any place, at any time, like some god or demon[ccxxii].
You just aren't a human anymore---
CCD3003B

And who else manifests all of a sudden?

Nanaka: "Heeey!"
Nanaka was right next to me.
As if manifested all of a sudden...
CCC0045A

Interesting, but of course a minor parallel is just that. There's one that's even more interesting:

What I get is,
she's something like Youko-chan, a special case.
There's just that sense of physical discomfort.
That was the limit for myself as I am right now.
CCB0005

That term, *sense of physical discomfort*, turns up at many odd times, especially around Nanaka like it does here, but it's also how he finds the traps around the hokora – and considering he does so with an impossible, unrealistic and *never foreshadowed or seen afterwards*[ccxxiii] sixth sense, it's to wonder what exactly he's doing.

Finally, as mentioned Youko is something of a mother figure to Taichi, and Nanaka makes it very very clear that she doesn't like Youko, who also happens to be the only character she ever refers to by name outside of Taichi.

And so, that Taichi was apparently brought up broody, angsty, and full of bull about RPGs and eroge may mean exactly what it says on the box: it was only the videogames, and no mother (or father) figure whatsoever[ccxxiv].

Nanaka and Youko even have a nice Red Oni Blue Oni thing going on all the way from the way they dress to how Youko drives a car and Nanaka a bike. And since Taichi also rides the bike well while he can't drive at all, there goes that metaphor again. And speaking of cyclists: Sakuraba can stumble upon the nuclear plant, while Youko somehow “can't go” there, for

reasons never really clarified (though unimportant if the power plant is chugging along regularly and no one's gone).

And so, it would be explained why Youko appears as a ghost in Another Story, while no other character does; she was always one.

V.VII.III.IV Mutsumi

Speaking of mother figures, there's Mutsumi, who is Taichi's host mother.

First and most blatant: Mutsumi, in the flashbacks, leaves sandwiches and a note to Taichi as she has gone out for work; Youko doing the exact same thing should be immediately suspicious, especially given how there's at least one scene that strongly hints that Mutsumi has not disappeared at all.

While Mutsumi is said to have kicked Youko out, which is an entirely separate level of bizarre from even just the idea that “84%” Kurosu Taichi would be allowed to live effectively alone as his host mother is out for most of the time, Youko still has a room full of clothes and underwear right next to Taichi's.

It's unused, but after all, there's no need for him to: Taichi will simply grab the Youko costume, including the female uniform – and that's why she's always in uniform: *Taichi is* – and stuff them in the Taichi Bag, to take them out when necessary.

After all, he does say he keeps his cosplay apparel there, right? And outside of one joke about Misato and swimsuits (with an obvious payoff[ccxxv]), nothing is ever seen about it. Even buruma play more of a part, being that Nanaka is sometimes found with a pair.

There's more oddities with regards to the food, first of which, why does Youko leave Taichi starving that one day in the Touko route? This is never explained, unless him going more than a bit mad while preparing food is the entirety of the explanation. Also odd how food seems no big problem to him in the Miki route, where Youko is “dead” for most of the time.

And then, the candies. Who makes them is harder to tell, especially since Mutsumi's job is never really clarified and could well be that of a cook. But speaking of cooks, there's one last character who's known to overfeed others and which is easy to forget: Yusa's mother.

She may be a problematic character in the girl's life, and the girl may literally no longer want to see Taichi and he might no longer see her, but there's no certainty that she's cut off her contact with him.

And while Yusa's house is more or less on the other side of the road, it *is* just that little slightly to the east. Not far off from the direct crow's flight line between Taichi's house and Youko's (claimed) rented apartment, either.

Regardless, Mutsumi may account for several of the actions attributed to Youko.

V.VII.III.V *What's in a Name?*

There's plenty more parallels between Youko and Taichi, and most importantly between Youko and Nanaka when it comes to names.

Youko is written weekday-child. *Child of the week* is a very odd name to have in a story which lasts a week, time loop or not. The 曜 *you* of her name combines with the 黒 *kuro* of Taichi's last name to form 黒曜石 obsidian, which is what her eyes are described as.

Taichi: "By the way, did you know that if you disassemble the kanji for Woman, you can get the 'ku', 'no', and 'ichi' to make kunoichi? They're hiragana, katakana and kanji respectively, tho."
CCA0030

Engine doesn't support kanji display so this had to be simplified, but if it did, the 'equation' is 女 = く+ノ+一. But also a point here is that it's written くの一: it's not an odd way of spelling it in the slightest, but in the Cross Channel tradition of hiding oddities in plain sight, Taichi's name being written 太一 with the same 'one' kanji is an interesting parallel.

This is a bit harder to see, but move the right descending 'leg' of 太 to the left a bit, and compare with 女: very similar[ccxxvi].

And finally, the nickname the Hasekuras gave him: 一姫 Ichiko, “one princess”. There's several pronunciations for this name, and no reading key is given, but I chose this as it's the girliest. It's also close in pronunciation to 一個 ikko, one fragment, one object. Other readings of interest are *hitomi*, pupil of the eye, for obvious reasons, and *ichihime*.

There's a saying in Japan, 一姫二太郎 "Ichihime Nitarou", meaning "it's good to have a girl first then a boy". Literally it's read *first princess second Tarou*, with Tarou being a typical boy's name; it contains the same *ta* as Taichi's, as can be seen.

So far it's mostly curiosities, nothing particularly telling; not so for the pun with Nanaka: changing one letter (or syllable in Japanese) of both Nanaka's and Youko's names we get nan***o****ka*, seven days, and youk***a***, eight days.

This further reinforces the oddity: the Child of the Week very nearly means *eight days*, which is a contradiction – more so when our week is barely even seven full days. And so, it's no wonder that Taichi doesn't remember Nanaka; he keeps thinking *eight* instead of the correct *seven*!

V.VII.III.VI Kiri Is No Longer Afraid

This part has been touched on, but it bears examining closely. Kiri is terrified of Youko after the fight at the grove:

Taichi: "Cutlery and that sort could be seen as weapon so hands off."
Kiri: "...yes."
Kiri: "Because I... don't want to die."
CCC3019A

But after the bathroom scene:

Taichi: "This is sooo embarrassHing for a man to say, but... Youko-chan'll be angry you know."
Kiri: "That is fine."

Kiri: "As long as I can just eliminate you."
CCC3023

Of course the bathroom scene can take care of the discrepancy, but considered with the point under examination, Kiri is also implying that if Taichi dies Youko won't be a problem. Worth noting if nothing else.

V.VII.III.VII Where's The Split Personality?

Taichi is said to have a split personality, yet all we see is him going 'crazy' at times. The two are not the same thing: blanking out while snapping is not quite having a split personality as commonly understood.

His snapping is also, as seen and as will be seen even more, patterning his hallucinations towards the past, and generally in a *suicidal* direction; he certainly is not killing anyone if there's no time loop to fix things.

Wouldn't it make more sense to have a different character who is also him?

Taichi himself discusses the thing multiple times, and read close:

1) There is one more personality in me that is writing on its own;
[…]
Number 1) isn't it. Guaranteed.
Because there is no such thing as giving typewriters to monkeys and them writing out Shakespeare by accident.
CCC0007

This *only and specifically* excludes that any split personality he may have could be writing the diaries. And that's true: Youko never wrote anything but that note.

2) Split personality.
[...]
The fact that I have a split personality, so to say.
Certainly, with this it would be possible to
explain the reason why I have no recollections.
However... if I say so myself, it's a bit hackneyed, seriously.

If it's gotta be like that, it'd be better if there were two of me or something.
CCC4016

Different script, exact same trick: of course it wasn't a split personality of his that laid the traps. The “two of me” would have been more ambiguous had Another Story been inserted into the storyline, and this is possibly one of its vestiges, but it now gives another oblique hint: wouldn't it be better if this split personality were *not* him going “crazy”, but someone *else* who acted more or less independently of him, despite sharing body?

After all, while a split personality is a very cheap trick in a mystery novel[ccxxvii], telling no one who or what that split personality is, going through the entire story without *ever* explicitly hinting she's a split personality, and most importantly *never* requiring the reader to understand this part of the story for it to make a (very very very very basic) sense is nowhere near hackneyed.

Girl: "I am Taichi, Taichi is me."
[…]
Girl: "I am Taichi, Taichi is me."
CCC0000

One body, one heart: *split personality.* It all matches, and best of all, demonstrates that the Alter Egos thing is not just impossible but *literally* insanity. And last but not least, in the Youko Sendback route, right after deciding to do away with her:

It hurts to be sent to the drawing board with my self still undefeated. To surmount the self is nearly as difficult as pronouncing the words 'self control', but... well.
CCD5001

That very last line was also said in the Infirmary scene of week 1, which was a very important reading key for Taichi's hallucinations. It's interesting he would bring it back, and of all places and of all times, right after Youko has jailed, tortured and (no ifs and buts) raped him.

If Youko is his split personality, then his self would still be undefeated if he were to take a reset at that point.

V.VII.III.VIII Close Your Eyes

Multiple times across the earlier parts of the story Taichi closes his eyes and 'somehow', right there and then, Youko acts. The first event is in the Beach scene:

I closed my eyes.
Someone took the can from my hand.
[…]
Tomoki: "Wh-, why did you put tea on it?"
Taichi: "...because green tea includes Catechin that has sterilization effects, duh〜!"
[…]
I open my eyes.
Misato-senpai had just applied a handkerchief.
CCA0027

Doesn't Tomoki sound *just* like he was just staring at this? And how could Misato *not* be looking at what happened? When Taichi asks who did it, everybody just suspiciously dodges the question.

Now, a big ruckus is made about Taichi knowing Youko, and intimately, which is bizarre: they've known each other between two years and several months, and while everyone has heard of Youko *no one* heard of the guy she hangs around pretty much exclusively and has no trouble being very clingy to? Wasn't Misato even warned by Youko?

And most importantly, how can everyone know about her *and* speak as if she's admirable, but not know, say, that she takes vacations off to go overseas to get military training (however ridiculous that may be)? What's this half-assed school gossip?!

Because neither Miki nor Kiri seem to have any clue about Youko or her relationship with Taichi by the Shimura Phenomenon talk – and that so much is told about Youko *there*, and that she appears but only to the one

character who's *just* been told so much about her is also incredibly suspicious.

Back to the beach, there's Miki's behavior to consider, as she's the most suspicious of the lot:

Miki: "My gratitude..."
Taichi: "Give it to whoever poured the tea."
Miki: "But also to Senpai, the same amount."
CCA0027

She's *adamant* on this. Given she's the one person who absolutely should have seen, and how she is found playing Taichi's game, it's far from impossible that she either knows already about this oddity of Taichi's, or is learning on the spot, as this is also the point where she has enough information to know he's not good with the blood.

Two possibilities here. One, a speedy phantom came in, invisible to people standing *literally in front of her* and only in some measure of panic – which would include Tomoki, who shouldn't be susceptible to breaking that way! – then took the can from Taichi's hands, pulled open the tab, poured it on Miki, and disappeared *before anyone including Miki even noticed* . Two, Taichi did this himself, and the rest are mixed between playing along or simply not paying attention.

Needless to say which is more plausible.

There's even more to consider with how Youko brings in Yusa and then vanishes. It's not clear how long Yusa has been around the group, but likely from the very start, i.e. Taichi (perhaps in drag) brought Yusa to the beach, then vanished to change into costume. This would also explain why he “sees” Youko in a costume: *he* is in a costume.

And don't miss Sakuraba in this scene: he punches out very quickly. Consider that with Yusa there would be eight of them around; but if eight cannot be, then it's another case of *Sakuraba knows*.

We'll see the detailed analysis of how Taichi does this eye switching in the Kiri assault scene, but there's another right after the Touko sex scene:

I cover my face.
[…]
On her bare buttocks, magic marker scribbling.
[...]
In that flash of an instant!
And without any sign of her presence at all!
CCB2014

He's the closest to Touko and he closed his eyes. And then he picked up the magic marker himself and scribbled: that quickly solves why he wouldn't feel or hear her. Of course, scenes in which he is alone are simplest to dismiss as hallucinations, but with the beach scene being almost too blatant this is just another riff on the same verse.

V.VII.III.IX *The Antenna's Progress in Misato Sendback*

When it comes time to go to the beach in the Misato Sendback route, to convince Misato that it's OK to take a day off the beach he recruits Youko. Except that's not necessary for multiple reasons, first and foremost because Misato doesn't really seem to mind back in Week 1:

Taichi: "Could we still go to the beach, tomorrow?"
Misato: "...the beach?"
Taichi: "The two of us."
Misato: "Should we, then."
She might just be thinking about what to do about club activities.
Taichi: "Rest and recuperation are also necessary."
Misato: "...they are, yes."
Misato: "Then tomorrow we rest, aaall out!"
CCC0025C

Most importantly, Taichi hints that he could do this way faster than she is:

If I truly give it all, I would be done in three days.
CCX0001

And that she is also not going as fast as she can:

Disregarding efficiency, including wasteful processes:
but it is unimaginable that Senpai, always supporting the club alone as she had, would not know the basics.
CCX0001

Both in Week 1 and Misato Sendback, lots of time is spent working on the antenna, but the real hint remains in the finale: Taichi's madness and slacking starts around Wednesday, and he screws around pretty much until Friday night. Most of the work is done then, with the point being that there is *no need whatsoever* for Youko to make progress on the antenna on the Friday in which Taichi and Misato are at the beach.

And that's why Youko is said to have left without a trace:

Youko-chan was nowhere around.
As Mimi-senpai has returned she likely left, having been relieved of duty.
CCD1001B

Or, possibly, was never there in the first place.

V.VII.IV Specific Scenes

General hints are all fine and good, but as mentioned, there are seven (surprise!) scenes where Taichi and Youko *both* interact with a third character directly. At least, on the surface: in practice, none of these scenes will require the two to be separate in any serious way, and most importantly, with minimal or no use of the *hallucination* trump card.

Some of these scenes are set up in such oddly specific ways that reading this as anything but intentional is difficult.

V.VII.IV.I The Misato Infirmary Scene in Kiri's Route

*These quotes are from script **CCC0041** unless noted.*

As with the one in the first week (and perhaps as the one with Sakuraba), this scene contains a great number of oddities. Right from the start something is off, with Taichi repeating himself fairly obsessively:

A space that demands a teacher nurse with glasses and big boobs (oftentimes with the verbal expressions of a man, like saying 'sugee' instead of 'sugoi').
An infirmary with no teacher nurse with glasses and big boobs is like medium-fatty tuna served without any condiments at all.
However, right now, I of course cannot have any expectations of a teacher nurse with glasses and big boobs.

Someone likes those words so very much, don't they[ccxxviii]? Now, don't let the nurse thing or all the rest distract: the key is *big boobs and glasses*. There's one character that fits this: Misato, who is currently in the infirmary. And the callbacks to Misato keep happening:

Nurse Youko: 『...no good. If you touch me, you won't get away with it.』

Inevitability of consequence of touching, which was there in the Misato sex scene:

Taichi: "...that is not happening. When a man has gotten this far there is no longer retreat."
CCA0025C

Next:

Nurse Youko: 『...yes... stand firm like that... good boy...』

Talking to him as if he were a child or a pet, very Misato-ish.

And then there's the explicit callbacks to the first infirmary scene:

She returns to the herself of always.

vs.

Misato: "Ah, the Peke-kun of always has returned..."
CCA0016

Which then segue into odd parallels with Misato's brother, which used the same engrishy line just the previous scene:

Youko: "Taichi was currently attempting to perform a Bajungas Touch."
Taichi: "NO-, NOO (No)[ccxxix]."
Youko: "Choosing to turn to English is suspicious I think..."
Youko: "As Taichi is weak at English, that is an important point in a deduction."

Indeed it is! This is why many parts had to be translated uhhh *creatively* so, like the most relevant line in the first infirmary scene.

And then, there's one more detail that's particularly easy to forget:

Taichi: "This tactile sensation, could it be?!"
Youko: "Indeed... no-bra."

...like Misato was in the infirmary scene:

Well, in other words... she's currently going no-bra.
CCA0016

It's replaced with a towel, and never brought up after the tools fall down, but she's necessarily bra-less even in the infirmary.

Via my touching this soft and springy bosom, my intelligence is indeed being wholly disassembled!
The higher the voluminousness of the chest, the faster the velocity of that disassembly.

He's bringing up something that is technically completely irrelevant, as Youko's boobs are just that, neither the biggest nor the smallest. Except, the

highest voluminousness of all would be inevitably Misato's, so it ends up being a recall of that. Speaking of which:

My massage makes those breasts travel with a degree of freedom comparable to an analog controller.

And back in the Misato sex scene...

The two breasts deform and mush freely in every direction independently.
CCA0025C

So *every single part of the scene so far* screams about Misato. It's well beyond the call of duty here, and far beyond the level of character cross-references that's typical of Cross Channel (and that is saying something). Then, Misato wakes up:

Misato: "Peke-kun!"
Taichi: "Ye-, yes!"
Misato: "That now was a yellow suspension do you know!"
[...]
With a heroic gesture that reminds of the slaying of her enemy, Senpai scythed her arm sideways.

Suspension is what she breaks out when more than a bit flustered, sort of how Tomoki goes for 'traitor', and that last line is very very chuuni-like. And then:

Misato: "It has been a while, Hasekura-san."

This is the absolute first time that any character has addressed a single line of dialogue to Youko while Taichi was simultaneously onscreen. And that's one thing. It is also *the single and only line* that Misato ever addresses at Youko throughout the entire scene.

She's also swinging in mood immediately and uncharacteristically, just like the similar scene in the Week 1 infirmary scene, and right after something compatible with the Karade lines of Taichi's back there.

Read the ensuing dialog very carefully:

Taichi: "Youko-chan has saved you you know."
Misato: "Oh... it was Hasekura-san?"
Youko: "I was not the one who saved her, no."
Taichi: "Then who?"
Youko: "...Shima Tomoki."
Taichi: "It was Tomoki?"
Ah-hah, that is why that guy just earlier...
Taichi: "Senpai, that guy's really shy, so..."
Senpai was standing in blank amazement.

Taichi says Youko did it; Misato responds *to him*. Youko says Tomoki; Misato does *not* respond. Taichi says Tomoki; Misato has a reaction *to that*. Let's try the same dialog, but with Youko's lines removed:

Taichi: "Youko-chan has saved you you know."
Misato: "Oh... it was Hasekura-san?"
Taichi: "Then who?"
Taichi: "It was Tomoki?"
Ah-hah, that is why that guy just earlier...
Taichi: "Senpai, that guy's really shy, so..."
Senpai was standing in blank amazement.

It's kind of a Garfield-without-Garfield moment, but then, Taichi is quite known for talking to nonexistent things, from his own belly bug to Nanaka. And the scene works without her lines: there is no need for Misato's reactions to be to anything Youko says.

Moments later:

When I come to notice, Youko-chan had disappeared.

And as it always happens, she vanishes as if she had never been there in the first place.

Hypothesis. Taichi was rubbing Misato's breasts, who was understanding but firm on the subject. Despite Youko being in front of Taichi, every single last detail of the scene *screams* that this should be the case.

Foreshadowing is to be excluded, as by this point Misato's accident is well established, and Tomoki was seen moments before, therefore no one could be in that infirmary but her. Cross-characterization is ridiculously overwrought even by the standards of the story, and serves no apparent purpose here as the parallels between Youko and Misato are in fact very feeble.

There is exactly one single line that acknowledges Youko even being present in that room, which can easily be put down to hallucination, her being understanding of his problems, or the recognizing of whatever Taichi uses to represent Youko's presence.

And like the Week 1 infirmary scene is the reading key for how Taichi doesn't have a single level of 'madness', this one is the reading key that puts Youko's existence very much in doubt.

V.VII.IV.II The Assault on Kiri in the Woods

*These quotes are from script **CCC3012A** unless noted.*

The scene begins fairly easy to examine if remembering the thing about Taichi closing his eyes and “coincidentally” Youko acting in the gap:

Take a deep breath,
close the eyes, and impose strong pressure on the eyeballs with the eyelids.
In the depth of the crystalline lens of the eye, an image like a switch toggling its state surges out.
The thing itself doesn't happen.
I am just intentionally accelerating what the eyes would, slowly, normally do at the moment of a sudden change in brightness.
Open.
The night became bright.
The most insignificant motions of the vegetation are displayed clearly in my field of vision.

The fickleness of cat's eyes---
Senses had become sharp.
Taichi: "This is bad... dammit."
There is also the sensation of having become someone else.

When he “switches” eyes he becomes someone else. *Who?* This would be never followed up, unless what he does is switch to Youko for a period of time. And slowly he'd begin to reassert himself, which would look like him approaching the scene of the events.

That's exactly what the reader sees, and not just once: in her Sendback route, Taichi recognizing that someone is burning something out in the mountain where the hokora is works very similarly, and shows a Taichi uncharacteristically befuddled and seriously slow on the uptake.

Back on the subject::

And the scene that filled my sight,
awakened horror and recollection simultaneously.

The scene he's reminded of, as the image that flashes on there reveals, is the final moment of the Hasekura Mansion massacre – where Youko did not kill anyone. Why would he be reminded of that if he thought Youko truly intended to kill Kiri?

This is Stone Throwing.
[…]
The slingshot of stone throwing, so hard to master, she manages as if it were an extension of her limbs.

Why use something this weird and flashy and not, say, a handgun? More importantly, this is Youko the Super Ninja taking a character repeatedly compared to glass by surprise and *utterly failing to even seriously wound her*.

Getting smacked with a stone and still being able to walk around the next day means either Kiri is ridiculously strong, or Youko laughably weak.

No bolt is nocked in Kiri's crossbow.
...she must've returned fire and missed.

This is even more absurd: the Elusive Phantom sneaks up on her, and she manages to *return fire*? What kind of an excuse of a Super Ninja is this? Of course, “Youko” could have caught Kiri in between reloads as she's practicing the crossbow, but that Taichi would even consider she returned fire is bizarre and suggests this is to be taken as Youko being worthless at this.

With her natural abilities, she could release it after one rotation.
Her might has decreased somewhat.
Consequently, Kiri's leg did not take a serious wound.

This is handwaving at best; what caused this decrease in might? Of course, Youko may never have been able to do the kind of thing that Taichi thinks she should be able to, from living without love to killing in cold blood, so it's less of a decrease in might but simply Youko becoming more realistic – like Touko does.

And of course, the question: if she can't do all that, and she is he, could *he* ever do it?

Setting her crossbow in front of her face, she sobbed.
Is this the limit for Kiri, then?
Taichi: "That's far enough."
I stand in front of Kiri.

Next up, Kiri blocks her own sight and *just then* Taichi goes to block her line of sight to Youko. This is ridiculously convenient: “Youko”, who had to be pretty much completely invisible in this near-pitch black darkness (remember the body at the hokora?), simply waits for her to cover up her face, and then walks in front of her. Now Kiri can't see anything but Taichi's back.

A physical discomfort towards the combination between the relief of her life being saved and the idea of my intercession.

And there's that term again, that sense of physical discomfort. Is it because of what he says, or is it because Kiri understands at some level that what is going on is Taichi having an argument with his split personality?

This returns to her possibly having more knowledge of the 98 Game (via Miki) than it seems, at least enough to know that it's a bad idea to wake this particular sleepwalker. In fact, her stating out loud that Youko is Taichi in drag may be, along with insults to his looks, what causes him to think himself “dead” in the bad end to her route.

Youko-chan twisted her wrist.
Taichi: "!!!"
From the side, Kiri's head had poked out to peek into our conversation.
I cover that face with the palm of my hand.

And *just* as she moves to incontrovertibly see both of them, he stops her.

The next instant, a stone was delivered together with intense pain.

If he's holding the belt and the stone in one hand, he could definitely smack the other. And this is even more blatant in Sendback:

Her stone throwing had bored a hole in the tree,
and the thrown stone had buried itself completely inside.
CCC3003

She couldn't hurt Kiri in with a free shot, but she can drill a hole through a tree trunk with it? This is ridiculous and incoherent. Now, Kiri never acknowledges that hole so it might not exist, but there's another possibility: the shot had been from near point blank. In other words, it came from Taichi's position.

Youko: "Hand me over Sakura Kiri's weapons."
Taichi: "Do it. Out with them."

Kiri: "Eh...?"
Taichi: "The crossbow, and that knife or whatever it is you have."
[...]
Wordlessly, Kiri tosses all in front of her.
Youko-chan picks them up.
Youko: "Weapons are forbidden. Should you posses or retain any weapon, it shall be seen as hostile intent."
Kiri: "....."

And as with Misato in the infirmary scene, read the dialogue carefully: despite it sounding *like* she's responding to Youko, she is actually always responding to Taichi. When addressed directly by Youko, she has no answer. Let's try the dialogue with Youko removed:

Taichi: "Do it. Out with them."
Kiri: "Eh...?"
Taichi: "The crossbow, and that knife or whatever it is you have."
[...]
Wordlessly, Kiri tosses all in front of her.
Kiri: "....."

She never ever directly addresses Youko throughout the scene at all. As for where the weapons go, either they're still on the ground, or they go in the Taichi Bag. As the weapon may not be a crossbow at all, it's likely to fit.

Taichi: "You think I'm the number one most dangerous, right?"
Kiri: "...indeed... but, you were not the only dangerous one."
Taichi: "Youko-chan, right?"
Kiri: "...I wasn't doing anything but... she wanted to kill me..."
Kiri: "Y-, you two are of the same kind... therefore, you are as each other."

Ah, but she knows it was Youko... *right after Taichi tells her* , naturally. But that's irrelevant: even her figuring out that Youko was there changes nothing; recognizing Youko is not the point, *her seeing both Taichi and Youko simultaneously* is.

Taichi can speak girly; how he would sound in falsetto is anybody's guess, but he's far from the manliest of men while Youko is far from the girliest of girls, and it's not unbelievable that his practice of girl's speech went as far as that (though at six-seven years old he wouldn't have had issues).

And then, Kiri's response. Kiri's naive, perhaps stupid, and this is established; but she thought practicing using a crossbow *on a doll of Taichi* was doing nothing? She can't possibly be this damn stupid. In fact, since there's nearly certainly no crossbow, it's to wonder what exactly she was doing out here, past the house of the man she'd be practicing to kill. Is the doll even there?

And finally, that last line would be her all but stating the truth: they are as each other. They *are* each other, specifically.

Hypothesis. Taichi went into the woods, "switched" to Youko, used something conveniently available like rocks and Taichi's trouser belt to attack Kiri, who never sees exactly who is attacking her. He's completely incompetent at it, and made a really poor job of it all – Sendback, where he says Youko is just playing along, is identical to this so that has to be simply a refinement of the Settei.

When Kiri covers her face, crossbow or not, Taichi steps between him and where Youko should be. Taichi may or may not be having a dialogue with himself in falsetto, smacks his hand with the stone he was trying to throw with the other hand (or into a tree in the Sendback equivalent), and puts her weapons in the Taichi bag.

Kiri never sees Youko and Taichi simultaneously, or acknowledges Youko at all.

V.VII.IV.III The Shimura Phenomenon Lunch with Kiri and Miki

*These quotes are from script **CCC3019A** unless noted.*

We've already seen one scene with Kiri, Taichi and Youko, but this one is even more bizarre and ultimately telling: Youko not existing is where the Shimura Phenomenon becomes both important and as clear as it can be.

Kiri: "...how come that person is so skilled at stone throwing?"
Kiri: "That is weird, very much so."
Taichi: "She's great at almost anything!"
Taichi: "Her fundamental capacity of doing seems just different."
Whatever she does, she catches the trick in an instant.
Kiri: "Did she get some special training?"
Taichi: "Yep, she did indeed. Every lengthy vacation period she goes to some foreign country and hires a local military instructor."
Kiri: "Military...!"
At a loss for words.
Taichi: "She learned stone throwing in one of those occasions I guess. Might even be that she learned it from real-deal shepherds."
Taichi: "Still hurts?"
Kiri: "...not particularly."

This is absurd, as noted, as well as contradictory as Kiri is largely unhurt. The point here isn't the content, it's that *Taichi is putting loads and loads and loads of garbage about Youko in Kiri's head*. Having a shared point of reference is where the Shimura Phenomenon begins to form: can't share the game without sharing some of the rules and concepts.

She's looking she's lookiiing!!!
We're being calmly looked aaat!!!

Taichi is the first to notice:

Taichi: "...we are being monitored with the Intelligence Techniques of the Ichihara[ccxxx] Style."

And then, finally, Shimura Phenomenon:

Kiri: "KYAAAAH?!"
Seems Kiri has seen.
Kiri: "Senpai! Se-, Senpa--- it-, it's it's..."
Taichi: "You're fine, you're by my side."
Kiri: "...y-, yes..."

Miki: "Eh? Eh?"
Kiri: "It-, it's..."
Kiri points. Miki looks with a 'what?'.

She points, but to *what*? Readers are supposed to take that it's Youko, but this is a very obvious trap, so it's necessary to wonder whether that's the case. And when Miki looks:

Youko-chan's figure is not there.

This is even more puzzling. How does Taichi know that Miki can't see her? Did he look? But he could see her just a split second ago! And if Kiri isn't pointing at Youko, what is Miki looking at?

And then there's Kiri's reaction, which is just bizarre. She all but freezes, not even noticing his putting hands on her shoulders:

Kiri: "...ngh, ngggh..."
Kiri is so tense, she doesn't even notice my overfamiliarity,
like a cornered cat at its wits' end.

Very interesting consider the whole cats thing in the bathroom scene. This part of the scene is fairly surreal when read carefully, and may hint that it's Taichi who isn't quite "there", rather than Kiri. Because moments later he takes away his hands, and Kiri talks very inconsistently with what just happened:

Taichi: "Kiri-chin, pay attention!"
Kiri: "...to what?"
Taichi: "Even if harm doesn't come, there is still the possibility of harassment."
Kiri: "Ha-, harassment? What type, specifically?"
Taichi: "Uhmmm... something fairly malicious, of the wet and private kind I think."
Taichi: "Forcible deprivation of dignity perhaps, humiliating you and then brushing it off as a joke at the very last instant."
Kiri: "...is that that not the same as what you do?"

...as is known of Taichi when he goes 'wrong', see the Infirmary scene with Misato of which there's a strong reminder even with Youko. Interesting to note how Miki won't say a single word after the Shimura Phenomenon is described, not until Taichi goes to hold a grudge against her.

Not a word to Kiri who was shivering in terror, not to Taichi who was harassing her according to himself, not a word as Kiri rejects said harassment. This is out of character. Whatever is happening here it's what it looks like.

There are some minor changes in the Sendback version of this scene, but the conclusion doesn't change:

Taichi: "It's alright, it's all right. Just trying to psych you."
Taichi: "Let's ignore that, OK? Just ignore."
Kiri: "Yes... I will give it all. I am skilled at ignoring."
Miki: "Then after meal let's have sweets!"
So she'll eat them after all?
Kiri: "Uhm... Kurosu-senpai."
Taichi: "What."
Kiri: "But there is crying..."
Taichi: "Don't mind it!"
Kiri: "I do mind it..."
Taichi: "It's just acting. Don'tcha be fooled. Just like a robot has no human heart inside, neither does Michael... I mean, neither does she have a human heart."

CC3003B

Outside of the bizarre reference to robots and Michael Jackson, the trick should be easy to see: there is *no* mention of this being Youko outside of that odd last line of Taichi's, and the scene ends just two lines afterwards. Kiri does mention crying, but who it would be crying is not explicit nor can it be deduced outside of context; context which in this situation remains highly suspect, and the new graphics with Youko crying be damned (it's just Shimura Phenomenon, again).

This could very well be Taichi doing the same or similar thing he may have done in the normal route scene, and then began to cry himself.

Hypothesis. Kiri, moreso than Miki, has the tendency to take things too seriously. She was all but brainwashed by Taichi's chuuni and the scene she thought she saw in the forest, so when *something* happened that's unclear, it caused her to freeze in panic. Was it Taichi playing footsie? Was it narcolepsy and hallucination? Was it a glimpse at a phasing out of consciousness of Kiri's own? Regardless, something is very wrong with a scene that should be theoretically straightforwards, and there is *no* conclusive evidence that Kiri ever sees Youko.

V.VII.IV.IV The Bathroom Rescue

*These quotes are from script **CCC3022** unless noted.*

We've seen the *why* of Taichi doing this, so it's time to look at the rest. The first contradiction is in Kiri's own behavior, because she's acting very differently in the bathroom then she does when cornered by him elsewhere:

Taichi: "Resigned to your fate, are you, Sakura Kiri... no... Love Slave Sakura Kiri!"
I corner her next to the fence.
Kiri: "Ngh, ngh, ghhh〜..."
She's half-crying.
I am more and more excited.
Kiri: "Ngh, ngh, ngh... do-, don't touch me molesteeeEEEEEER!!!"
Taichi: "Gw'haaa!"
Kiboshlessly kickdowned by Kiri.
CCC3018

This is especially important in how it should be, to Kiri, a replay of Yutaka's death: cornered by Taichi on the rooftop. She just stomps him; and yet, she will have no resistance in the bathroom. It's even odder considering the bathroom scene is *mere hours* after this. Yet the only thing that changed is that this one is played as a humorous scene, and the bathroom scene isn't. But the humorous scene is not humorous for Taichi at all, for starters.

Does Kiri believe that Taichi ought be Correct so much she is reluctant to smack him down? Or does she simply understand, at some level, that Taichi's normal behavior is *not* as Evil And Murderous as she rants about? Regardless, this is an inconsistency big enough that it's worth considering.

Back on the topic of Youko, the entire ending of the scene is nonsense on its face:

Two.
Two cans.
They rebound off the wall, and fall to the ground.

This was originally just one, but was doubled in the console version for no immediately evident reason. Later on:

Youko: "And, I used two as service..."

Still not a real explanation, but looking at the event itself there are hints:

And then the things exploded. Both simultaneously.
The inside of the room was made white.
Thunderous roar. The pressure wave pushes on the back.
[...]
Eyes were burning.
Hearing was dimmed.
Stiffness throughout the body.
Cannot move.
This is... death from explosion.
I learn of this sense of physical discomfort.

There goes that term again. And why were his eyes burning if he had them firmly shut and all but held against Kiri? He's then dragged out of the bathroom by Youko, and moments later he's fine. *Perfectly fine*.

And that's why the number of cans were raised to two in the console version: so that it's easier to see that this ridiculous.

Flashbangs are explosive grenades, and explosions have the nasty habit of bouncing off of walls. One flashbang, tossed maybe near the outside of the toilet, *may* have been survivable if they were back in the depth. Two and right next to him? No. They would've both died.

Even if they had survived, Taichi at the very least would've needed hospitalization from severe air pressure shock, and his completely unprotected eardrums would be ruptured worse than Sakuraba's. He wouldn't be hearing or moving again for some time.

Flashbangs, in short, are not 'off' switches for humans. And here we get to the troll, because if that was it, it could simply be put down to some really bad research on Tanaka's part. Let's go back a moment:

And Kiri?
Mouth open. Eyes closed.
To pin down Kiri's ears I hugged her head.

The proper way to reduce flashbang's effects is mouth open (reduces pressure on lungs), eyes closed (reduces the flash) and ears covered (for the loud blast sound). It's sort of strange *she* is doing the first two, but I suspect the question mark up there was added (in the console version) to reduce the suspicion that she'd somehow figured out that these are flashbangs herself and before Taichi did.

So despite utterly failing to get something as serious as the effect of an explosive in closed quarters, even one specialized in avoiding lethality, we are somehow shown the best way to reduce its effect, and Taichi applies it – all with the bonus of preventing Kiri from seeing or hearing anything

And if she does see or hear anything, she conveniently *never* mentions it.

This is consistent with him knowing about MWI enough to discuss it, but failing to know who pioneered and popularized the concept. This is intentional.

Taichi: "...that was... from that time."

Youko: "Yes."

Youko says she used them way back when; now, the updated Youko route bad ending does mention one of the victims having gone to the bathroom, although something that loud seems out of place given the plan was mostly about stealth. *Did she try to stop Taichi with flashbangs?*

He is then pulled out, has a chat with Youko:

Ahhh...
What a nostalgic scent.
It has never changed ever since that time.
Her... indistinct sweetness.

He says it's Youko, but is it? Flashbangs are strong explosives, and far from odorless: how can he smell her before his hearing even recovers?

All five senses had more or less recovered.
Taichi: "My uniform got covered in dust."
Youko: "...I smelled some sweat."
Taichi: "I do wear this every day."
Youko: "....."
Expressionless disgust.

Hers is fine, however.

Concluding the topic of flashbangs, there's the version of this scene in the finale which features a comical sound effect and him tossing in a quote from what reads like a gamebook: not only is that far more credible than this, gamebooks exist very nicely somewhere between Choose Your Own Adventure stories of which Visual Novels are a close digital representative and Role Playing Games, which get plenty of references in Cross Channel as well.

Before moving on, there's a very interesting thing to compare this whole 'rescue' to. Right at the start of the Miki route, Taichi starts chasing Kiri. This is how the scene ends:

I shall make a bedlam of scattering the Flowers.
Taichi: "Kuh kuh kuh!"
By now Kiri is practically walking, and I lay my hands on her.
That split instant,
a shadow at the edge of my field of vision.
I concentrate on the instant. I see it in slow motion.
What is this?
A bicycle.
A bicycle, but,
Nanaka: "YAAAAAAAH!"
Taichi: "Goh'aaah?!"
I was smacked into the ground.
Awareness dilutes.
Kiri grows distant.
Nanaka: "Seriously... this boy... just wasting all his strength, without even going to the hokora..."
Grumble, grumble she muttered.
CCC0011C

Kiri is nearly captured, then he sees something at the edge of his vision, slow motion begins, and he's knocked out. Since Nanaka doesn't exist, and this is certain, what happens is not quite clear: does Taichi just stop himself? Is the memory of Nanaka somehow taking over and forcing him to stop? Does he just trip over and faceplant? Never clarified, but that's not particularly important.

What's important is that a nonexistent character stops Taichi from doing something possibly nasty to Kiri, and in a very similar way to the bathroom scene: this is another hint that what has happened here is not quite what it seems, as well as confirming that *something* can stop Taichi from doing something real without the something being real itself.

Also, Nanaka can destroy the chastity belt that Youko put on Taichi, no key needed, another interesting piece of symbolism.

Next is Kiri's reaction to this all: pretty much nothing. Even if Taichi was protecting her – and notice how he does that *instinctively*, much how Miki runs to save her in that route – she should have still gotten severely hurt, but like with the stone throwing, nothing. She never ever mentions flashbangs. That's absurd!

And when she comes out moments later and sees the both of them, she only has one comment that even remotely begins to acknowledge there's more than one person there:

Kiri: "I knew it... you... you people are..."

Which sounds like a plural; except, she could also mean “people like you”. And she's known to do this kind of stuff when really on the edge:

Kiri: "Always... bullied... because of those test results..."
[...]
Taichi: "Is that my fault too now..."
CCC4015

The only other reaction is this:

Youko-chan took out an edged weapon.
A very big knife.
Kiri's face turned white.

But there is no doll change, in any version, and besides, Taichi could've just pulled it himself. Then:

Youko: "...she is a prisoner of hatred, she is something dangerous to Taichi."
Taichi: "Going to break your promise?"
Youko: "But."
Kiri: "Why even at this point."
She wedges in.
Kiri: "...whatever happens... as long as I live, will I not just be made into food for you!"

She should still have a knife at her face, and the two of them are talking. And she just interrupts them! Certainly there's plenty to think that she's suicidally stupid, but nothing having happened makes far more sense. And that last line is very much not plural.

Taichi then apologizes, and rather than angry, Kiri appears struck dumb:

Kiri: "...I can't... comprehend."
Kiri: "Just what was that... what, just what are you?"
Kiri: "I cannot understand, I just CANNOT understand!"
Kiri: "...but... I do not care anymore..."
Holding down the disheveled pit of her stomach, she walks away.

Still not “you two”. Let's remove Youko from the scene once more: Taichi corners her, is about to do something bad to her, then suddenly holds her down, and moments later he leaves. He's maybe whispering to himself when she comes out, he maybe pulls a knife on her, and yet apologizes. No wonder Kiri is confused: he's acting insane. (And once more, a lie revealed a greater truth.)

While the flashbangs can be excluded, there's still the mystery of what caused him to leave, which can't be dismissed with simply the alternate personality stopping him internally. That's because, not long afterwards:

Miki: "Still, just now there was the sound of an explosion inside the school!"

CCC3023

...Miki and Misato hear that *something* has happened[ccxxxi]. Well, Miki does; Misato mentions it could've been a terrorist attack of some sort, which itself is bizarre considering there wouldn't be anyone but them, yet *never* says it was an explosion or anything specific. In fact, Miki is a known liar, very likely to be Unreset despite resetting in this route, and Misato may not even hear this exchange of theirs about the explosion.

Could she know that something had to have happened, and scared off Misato to play along to Taichi's game? It's not impossible, if odd. Taichi's explanation is utterly ludicrous:

Misato: "S-, so it was then... so in the end, what was it that happened?"
[...]
Taichi: "An alarm clock."
Miki: "...defective product wasn't it."
Taichi: "Ergo I tossed it!"
CCC3023

...and then Miki goes to the toilet, that is, goes to hand Kiri her own crossbow, making this significantly more suspicious. Misato is no slouch either:

Misato: "...it might just be that I need to thank you, I believe."
Taichi: "Thank me?"
Misato: "No, it is nothing. What are you doing?"
CCC3023

What exactly she thinks she's grateful for is not quite clear. The infirmary scene (the one already analyzed here) happened quite some time before, and that's the only thing she could reasonably be thanking him for - provided it was *him* that rescued her somehow, which wasn't this time.

The absolute simplest explanation is that Miki scared up Misato, and she didn't actually hear anything; another simple possibility is that *he* tossed something, although a something more likely to be firecrackers than grenades.

There's at least one more possibility: a female student walked into the toilet and began to scream her head off at the presence of a boy, as the unstable students of Gunjou are wont.

The screams are heard throughout the school, all the way to the rooftop, and certainly to the ear of the guards or of a teacher, who forcibly yanks Taichi

out. As he's a well known character, he likely gets off with minimal reprimand (not that he's listening to them anyway).

Of course, getting surprised – as with tripping and faceplanting – are odd coincidences, but that itself is not necessarily random in Cross Channel.

Hypothesis. Whatever it was that stopped Taichi, it wasn't any number of flashbangs. Regardless of the reason for his stopping, there is far too little in Kiri's behavior that shows she recognizes Youko as distinct from Taichi, and nothing that doesn't have at least one alternate explanation.

V.VII.IV.V Youko's Death at the Hokora

*These quotes are from script **CCC4010** unless noted.*

Now things start getting interesting. The answer to the question still left suspended in the analysis of the Miki route with regards to the death of Youko is easily answerable here: there never was a Youko. In fact, the pressing question here isn't whether Kiri sees Youko and Taichi simultaneously – it's highly probable she doesn't – it's *how does Taichi knows Youko is dead before seeing her body?*

Taichi: "Bear with it, I'm going to summon a famed physician now."
I opened the window and whistled.
C'mere! Youko!
She doesn't come.
Once again, I whistle.
COME HERE! YOUKO!
Taichi: "....."
Well now.
CCC4007

This takes place after Youko's death, but before Taichi sees her body. That means Taichi knows she's dead before seeing her, and if there's nothing there to actually see, there's a problem. There's few avenues of investigation here, and the major lead involves Youko's time of death and Miki.

I touch. Cold.

Days after death. Rigor mortis it seems.

This is Wednesday evening, the same day as the game where Kiri nearly days and the scene above takes place. "Days", therefore, can be taken to mean at least Monday. Youko said she'd be back by noon on that first day, but she's conspicuously missing. Right after Miki “rescues” Taichi:

Ah right, Youko-chan said she would come back by noon, but,
she should have already come by now.
She could be,
behind me!
...she's not there?
CCC0011C

This allows setting the hour of death pretty definitely: Monday before noon. Which is around the same time as the Kiri chase scene, which ends interrupted with Nanaka; in it, Taichi passes out, and is more than a little manhandled by an explicitly Unreset Miki, meaning she had all the time to do absolutely anything to him or to anything he owns.

First, the blatant symbolism: Nanaka (somehow) shatters Taichi's chastity belt, and thanks to that, Miki can make him wear the elephant-shaped trunks. This is quite blatant[ccxxxii] to say the least, especially considering the nature of the three characters: the real mother, the 'adoptive' mother, and probably the only plausible long-term love interests for him.

So what happened exactly? What made Taichi 'set' Youko as dead and therefore Miki to accept that? There's only theorizing on this, although some theories are more complex than others[ccxxxiii]. A simple possibility is that Youko exists as some kind of physical representation, for example, a doll.

There does exist a Taichi doll, after all, and although it's not as driven home as it is for Taichi, Youko is *also* a living doll, so it would make sense for there to be a Youko doll. Said Youko doll would be in the Taichi bag, right next to the clothes he uses to cross-dress as necessary; if he were to ever

look into the bag and find the doll missing, then Youko would be gone as well.

Since when Youko doesn't come back at noon (in the quote above) Taichi already has enough material to conclude she's gone, then this doll would have disappeared at the end of the Kiri chase. It's possible it just fell out and into the woods, but it's well possible Miki intentionally stole it: at the hokora, Kiri came back and expected a body, meaning Miki is the one that pushed her to go back and look for Taichi.

And so, Miki would have taken the Youko doll and hidden it at the hokora, pierced with a crossbow bolt or not. As for *why*, that's not easy to tell, no easier than it was to tell why she would lie about the diary at least; while it can be said she wants to help him, and she would *know* Youko is not real, she does seem genuinely afraid that Taichi would freak out completely if Youko is gone.

Perhaps, that she tried to “beat” Youko – ironically as Kiri claims she would be able to do after some Training From Hell in the ending of her Sendback route – and failed like this is also part of the reason she rejects attempting to control the world.

Another alternative is that Youko is an actual animal, perhaps a dog or a cat:

When I spoke to her, she was happy like a little animal.
Even though I was cruel,
she was just like a tiny little rabbit.
...truth is, she had become more like a lion or a big bad wolf.

Given the unpredictability of animals I would suspect this isn't the case, but the possibility remains. And so, the animal would've just died. That it would've tripped a trap at the hokora is quite a cruel end, but then there's one more thing to question here: are the traps *actually* there? We know Taichi would take Miki's word for it, and she has tried pretty hard to prevent Taichi from going there with all her club antics, as well as warned him:

Miki: "Ah, over there's... danger..."

In this scene Taichi is without flashlight, and since he doesn't have *actual* night eyes but a slight night vision at best, he can probably see less than Kiri can – even considering that the city lights might make even the hokora brighter than pitch-black at least.

And then, there is something wrong immediately upon arrival at the scene:

Taichi: "I finally larrived."
I expressed my strong feelings by unnecessarily making a word start with "la".

The original term is *ranuki kotoba*[ccxxxiv], and ties directly into the Another Story scenario, so this is no random oddity but a vestige of that scenario. Taichi then trips:

Taichi: "Gh'yah!"
My ankle bent. I go tumbling down.

And *then* he starts seeing the traps. Remember how Taichi hitting his head was added at *both* first true introductions of Youko in the Kiri and Miki routes? I doubt this is accidental. The way he 'sees' the traps is interesting:

Immediately a warning signal sounded.

And this is exactly how he warns himself of Nanaka coming to Zubaaan him:

Warning signal.
CCC0006A

It's also associated with Miki:

Miki jumped on Kiri.
Kiri: "Eh!, what are...!?"
On my forehead, a small warning signal goes off.
At once Kiri shifts the point of attack.

Also making a return appearance:

> The only thing I can search for is the sense of physical discomfort.
> Found it.
> That sense of physical discomfort will never escape from my eyes.

As he would use this "sixth sense" associated with things that don't exist to detect the traps, it's easy to imagine that these traps are unlikely to exist. Regardless, he's all but pulling a superpower out of his ass because the plot demands it, normally a pretty bad thing to do, but since Taichi is chuunin' it up it's just another hint for the pile.

Next oddity is the placement of the body:

> I come out of the last bush and there, as if she were concealed, Youko-chan had died.

Why concealed? Did she do this herself in between being hit and dying? Did it just happen randomly, or was it on purpose? The answer is not easy to give, but it's the oddities and the suspicions they bring are of interest. At this point it should be clear that the stranger and more unreal things are, the less *hallucination* looks like a cheap trump card.

He also brought out his own knife in all this, with all that it means[ccxxxv]:

> I took out the knife from the Taichi bag.
> It was a large Chris Reeve knife[ccxxxvi].

Last time he tried to pull it out (the thing at the end of the bathroom scene excluded) it was in the Touko route, where he "forgot it at home" as Touko takes out a sword she very likely doesn't have. There's the remote control thing, and it'll be relevant in a sense(!) soon, but this is also suspicious:

> Taichi: "In hand-to-hand, if it comes to grappling, I think you might just get killed in an instant. She has knowledge of lots of techniques, and lately, she

purchased this really expensive knife."
CCC3019A

Of course she could have just bought two, but it's an odd coincidence at least.

And then, instead of leaving her where she is like he does with Touko, he decides to cremate her. Now, cremating a human is tough, especially without proper equipment, and it *really* stinks. Touko could smell the potatoes roasting from half the city away (which actually makes it likely she's lying), but not even Miki mentions this?

This all becomes far simpler if all he's doing is burning some kind of doll, which he can then go back and build again (provided he doesn't just have a spare[ccxxxvii]).

Hypothesis. Something happened between Taichi getting "knocked out" by Nanaka, or whatever the event represents, and him regaining conscience that caused him to set Youko as dead. There is possibly some kind of physical representation of Youko, maybe a doll that Miki would've stolen and hidden or that he'd have lost somehow, maybe an animal that actually died.

Regardless, he stops being able to 'summon' Youko after a very specific point in very suspicious circumstances that would have nothing to do with Youko herself on an obvious look. The body is never seen by Kiri, as in that analysis, so it is effectively never seen by anyone but Taichi and perhaps Miki, who may be the one that gets 'rid' of Youko.

The questions remaining are *why doesn't the 'death' of his split personality 'fix' Taichi?* and *why does Youko's death make Taichi begin to hallucinate everybody dying?*

V.VII.IV.VI The Public Sex Play with Misato

This one is the hardest of all to 'eliminate', in the sense seen so far. There are too many lines of Misato's that refer to Youko to write off as hallucination, although polite playing along to his madness is still very

much plausible. Fortunately, there's many elements that put serious suspicion on the existence of this scene in the first place.

The oddities begin immediately: why pick Misato for this? And how is her letting *him* do this to her in any way "giving in to her"? This makes sense from symbolical standpoints: if he's given in fully to her, then their roles may well be considered reversed. This is better visible in her Sendback route, where she tortures him sexually.

Next, there's many elements of retread that hint that this may just be a reassembled memory. There's a scene near the end of the Touko route where Misato can't find her glasses, as Taichi kisses down Touko to "distract" her. The ending is pretty much the same, with both Touko and Youko passing out and Misato asking if it's a serious illness.

Most importantly, *both* take place on a Saturday. Therefore, as with the infirmary scene with Youko she's likely no-bra, the reason she doesn't quite see anything may also be because she doesn't have her glasses on here either.

There is also something very wrong and very off character for Misato: the implication is that she is mopping up blood (just like Miki routinely does , more retreads) right after taking off her brother from the antenna and stuffing him into the prefab, which is his death at the end of the Miki route (retread).

This cold ruthlessness is simply out of character for her, and more resembles Youko's, paradoxically. Yet if Misato *had* done that, then she'd be so out of it that she'd be unlikely to be paying any sort of attention to what is going on in front of her.

Most importantly, *Taichi* could not get Tomoki off of the antenna (for the simple reason that he's not there and he's trying to bend some of the wires that Tomoki broke before being surprised by his sister, having a fight and leaving); but frail little Misato can?

This is similar to the opening of Another Story, where Misato would've run halfway through the town, chased by a completely insane Taichi: but as we're shown in the volleyball scenes (both flashback and Sendback), she is a thoroughly incompetent athlete, not to mention barely able to bring up the really heavy stuff from the club room. This is all both out of character and unlikely as far as her established physical skills are concerned.

But despite this callousness, she'll jump not half an hour later, again just like the Miki route and which again is a retread of Yutaka's suicide. It could be because she (incorrectly) thinks Taichi saw through to her, and if we take this seriously, that's why she would be playing along to his showing up and doing... whatever he is doing. The suicide would still be self-defeating, however.

More importantly, the scene that follows is one of the most complicated psychosis attacks in Taichi, and one of the hardest to understand scenes in the entire story.

First, he'll repeat parallel the Mansion massacre with the deaths (more or less real) of the current Club. This is significantly expanded in the revised console scripts, as backported in the included translation patch. The parallels with how things go with the current members and with the Shinkawas are detailed to the level of complete absurdity, and open up very interesting parallels.

And then, what would seem to be the loop happens, and *then* another ending happens, which is something closer to the end of Week 2. And then yet another loop happens, and this time the route actually restarts.

The concept of MWI-style quantum realignment, where Taichi somehow rejects the ending where he butchers the few that are left in favor of an ending where things were going better until they precipitated, is certainly applicable here; but this part of the story remains extremely puzzling and unclear.

The only thing that's clear that something has been very wrong from the moment Taichi decided to give in to Youko [ccxxxviii] . This is relatively easily,

if cheaply, explained with Taichi somehow recognizing that giving in to Youko doesn't quite mean what it appears to mean, and the rest being simply his more or less feverish hallucination.

Perhaps he does go to the rooftop, maybe alone and cross-dressed, and masturbates in front of Misato who is being... understanding, supposedly, and then has a stronger attack of some sort, where he remembers closely the events that transpired the *last* time he gave in to Youko, and the madness that came with those:

Taichi: "Don't you remember."
Not what happened then.
Not the day of the holy battle, in the holy sanctuary---
CCD0022A

This was added, or rather tweaked, from the original script.

And finally, there's *how* Taichi is manipulating Youko: *literally sticking his hands up and inside her* . This symbolism for puppetry is so blatant it may well be the main point regardless of everything else.

Hypothesis . Whatever Youko is, and whatever is happening, taking this scene literally is not something that can be reasonably done. Interestingly, it joins the *Secession* ending on the rooftop as being possibly too "off" to analyze and dismiss with ease at this level of interpretation.

V.VII.IV.VII Youko Helping Taichi Lie to Miki About Kiri

These quotes are from script **CCD4003** *unless noted.*

Conversely, this is altogether too simple to. Miki's welcome is already telling:

Miki: "...ah, Senpai."

No plurals of any kind. And then, Taichi on Kiri:

Taichi: "She intends to go investigate around the power plant, in a duo with Youko-chan. Woman among Women inn'she!"
Miki: "With... Hasekura-senpai?"
Taichi: "Yup. And that very Hasekura-senpai has also come as today's guest!"

The lie is not very good, for starters, and even Unreset Miki would know it's a load just from the way he's complementing it with that manga-like reference. It also reinforces how Youko should be right next to him, yet Miki is not even even acknowledging her. And this is how she does:

Miki: "...it has been a long while since we last met."

First, that's oddly rude of her, considering; second, it's the *same words* that she uses with the signing back in Week 1, as well as the same words that Misato "uses" in the Infirmary scene with the two of them. It's nowhere near coincidental. Third, she's not addressing Youko by name, and never does. No need to stress how incredibly suspect that is with all the context of the above.

Besides, when did the two of them meet last, anyway? She says the two met at the hokora when Youko figured out what its purpose was, but of course that can't be right...

Youko: "I will be investigating the power plant with Sakura Kiri. I will not let anyone intrude."
So she said as if proclaiming it to an enemy.
Miki: "I-, I see..."

...although her status as 'enemy' in Youko's mind is kind of hard to explain otherwise. Of course she'd see all possible love interests for Taichi as enemies, but that's a fairly generic thing. This would be the first time outside of the obviously off rooftop scene that anyone *appears* to address more than one single line to Youko with Taichi present. Of course, this doesn't last:

Miki: "So where is Kiri-chin now?"

Taichi: "She's already on board the airplane."

Note that Taichi answers, not Youko. Also, the level of lie has reached the molten core of the Earth and is now scrambling to invent a shovel resistant enough to dig through *that*. This is now a hackneyed scene where Kiri has been taken away by the antagonist stepmother and Miki will have to run to the airport to get her back. It's just outright silly.

Taichi: "And because of that you can't see her. Right, Youko-kun?"
Youko: "...right."
Miki: "So that's how it is..."

This one may be addressed to either...

A larghetto bow,
and with this her role ends.
.....
And, after making Youko-chan leave,

...and this segue is really crappy.

Hypothesis. Miki has been playing along and has never Reset in a simplistic meaning, so her "seeing" Youko can be easily dismissed. Regardless, there's maybe *two* lines ever addressed at Youko herself by Miki, and the entire story is so ridiculous it's simply out of character that Miki would ever buy it, not unless the Reset returned her to a status that is even less clever than the first week.

V.VII.V A Story Without The Eighth

Nowhere in Cross Channel it is said *explicitly* that Youko doesn't exist, not even as it is said for Nanaka. In fact, nothing apparently *requires* Youko not to exist; however, if Tanaka did not intend the Tayouko[ccxxxix] interpretation, he sure did the single worst job imaginable at avoiding it.

While her actual identity (toy, animal, something else) is also unclear, the hardest question of all remains *why?* This is the hardest question to answer.

Superficially, besides being a nicely complicated and very clever twist, it's payoff for multiple things that apparently didn't have any: Taichi's backstory as a cross-dresser and someone well learned at speaking like a girl do not have any significant impact on the story as the absence of Youko would.

This also explains why Youko seems to appear and disappear at random, her seeming superpowers, as well as how she learns of the hokora system: her being just his memory means she always knew, like Nanaka did.

It also gives the lie as to allegedly not-him seeing *eight* presences at the end of Another Story, as there must be only seven there anyway. And he also says he cannot "incarnate a presence", but see Nanaka.

There's also how this twist actually fits most of the characters, really. Taichi's pretentious words are actually deep, neither tsundere had a tsun side to start with (one is just a very possessive dere, the other tries to help until she believes she has to work for revenge), the idiot comic relief is one of the most important characters of the piece, the flat-chested loli is the oldest character in the story, and on and on and on: a split personality that serves little purpose fits very well.

However, all that just moves the question; it does not answer *why* were things written that way. There's a *reason* for all of those characterizations, after all.

We begin to see the answer by looking at how the Youko Sendback route changes completely: if she doesn't exist, what Taichi is doing there is not struggling against an old friend, but *fighting against an internal demon*. The chains that bind him to the bed become mental, and the entire time of imprisonment becomes a metaphor for what Taichi has been trying to do all along: be alone.

Not in the sense of a typical hikikomori, withdrawn from society but still interacting with it via media consumption; after all:

We read to know we are not alone.
C.S. Lewis

Light novels or visual novels, but in the modern era even anime and manga. And even if it's one-sided, like imagining interactions or talking out to the air is not *true* solitude. To be *truly* alone is to be sitting still in his room, with no conception of time, with no one and no thing but the teasing reminder of physical needs (thirst, hunger, lust) that won't allow him to distance himself from the world in the way he wants.

What he would want is a death that is not death; but we are approaching themes that go far deeper than the level of study we are currently at.

V.VII.V.I Youko Sendback Without Youko

Let's see more of how the letter of Youko Sendback changes without Youko, rather than the themes.

The Youko Sendback route itself reads a little more oddly than most other routes[ccxl]. Most of the first half is him constantly taking Youko in an uncharacteristically unserious way, blurting out really silly lines like this:

This is a Craisis of Ai-den-te-tee[ccxli]. A real Pinch-ee.
CCD5001

His plan towards Youko is no more credible than the ones Kiri used against him: confront with meandering and possibly contradicting rants, accuse, insult, have a weapon or so, and hope it works somehow.

When he approaches her, he's being as clumsy and stupid as he can possibly be while still calling his facade perfect. If Youko doesn't physically exist and his imprisonment is largely metaphorical, this changes in meaning considerably: what he's taking too lightly becomes, as he himself will say, *the concept of pure solitude:*

And then I notice:
I was in a solitude far beyond the depths of the one I had thought of.
With this number of days elapsed?
And just because I was shut inside a room?

I was being a child, full of excessive optimism.
Living alone, as if!
Getting on with life alone, as if!
Why did I even think that.
CCD5001

More parts begin making odd sense, such as Taichi using a Myotron. The Myotron is little more than a harmless toy, completely useless in practice, but hyped beyond ridicule in an infomercial that has to be seen to be believed .

It certainly fits the idea of Taichi being a complete scientific and technical incompetent for him to fall for something as obviously stupid as a stun gun that runs on a clock's battery. And he even takes an additional battery for good measure, despite the Myotron's battery being advertised as not needing a replacement and being in fact non-replaceable.

But if Youko is merely in his mind, then whether the Myotron works in reality is less relevant than what it is *hyped* to do. The Myotron is claimed to *stop the violent brain waves* of the attacker, while therefore being "coincidentally" harmless against those who aren't aggressive: if Youko is little more than his Evil Side given embodiment, then the reason he'd think this would work becomes immediately apparent. It would be little more than what he usually does, smacking the side of his temple in which he claims the Generator of Nihilistic Garbage resides.

If it were a real stun gun, it could be hypothesized that the reason he passes out is that he tangled melee with her as he used it, not exactly the smartest of moves; since it's a Myotron, the only way it'd work is for Taichi and Youko to be the same person, and for Taichi to truly believe it does work, making the delusion reality.

Also of interest this line:

Mild heartburn. I was awake.
CCD5001

Heartburn right after having been knocked out by Youko. This isn't a side effect of being tased that I can find, and although being choked could plausibly cause this, it's more interesting to compare with all the vomiting and parallels seen with Yusa.

While a reliable *why* is not answered at this point, certainly many things make more sense with Youko not existing.

V.VII.V.II Did Youko Ever Exist?

To find an answer to *why* it helps looking at the past; while the question of whether Youko exists in the main story may be settled, the question of whether that was *always* the case is yet to be approached.

There's two major possibilities: Youko existed up until a point, or she never did from the very beginning – plus variants.

V.VII.V.II.I Youko Was Always Taichi's Female Persona

Forced to act the part of a girl, Taichi psychologically ejected this part of his – once more returning to the concept of *vomiting* – into an alternate personality. As the Hasekuras rejected Taichi as a male, so does he begin rejecting himself, considering himself worthless and continuing to put faith into the increasingly mythological figure of Youko.

Her own backstory, with her father overseas and her mother dead, may well be Taichi's, projected onto this external persona.

But psychological trauma is no simple straightforwards thing, and neither is split personality. When the Hasekuras left and the Shinkawas came, he was finally free of Youko. And yet...

If only that man had not come---
CCD0023

This could be Yutaka, but it could also be his father; it's him who puts Taichi in a girl's clothes yet again. This alone may have been fine, but Yutaka then comes in and *derides* him for doing what he's been told. This makes Taichi snap. His recovery is poor to nonexistent, and consists in

mostly withdrawing himself into videogaming and manga until Misato comes and brings him out.

Of note that he claims he wasn't a virgin in the vow scene, and Nanaka claims Youko was his first, which seems like a problem; but by the vow scene he might have already had sex with Touko, and she's all but a living embodiment of Youko, further highlighting this parallel with his inability to make things work given Touko's reality.

This shows how his ability to work in the real world with its constraints had never grown correctly, and was damaged beyond repair before the story starts; as the cold and uncaring Real World continues not to meet his unrealistic expectations, he eventually withdraws from it, first allowing a few friends, then perhaps ejecting them, perhaps just rationalizing their leaving as time marches on and people move on.

This is what he means with “not being qualified” to have friends.

After trying to live exclusively with himself, that is his split personality, he manages to at least reject the latter and commits to the Sisyphean assembly of the antenna: it's one-sided, but it's still communication, showing how for all his trouble, he still managed to find some way of happiness.

It may not be to everyone's liking, of course:

Kiri: "...but can that girl be happy with that?"
Taichi: "Naturally."
Taichi: "The shape happiness takes is different between people, that's all."
CCC3007

And Kiri disliking the way that girl living off by himself can be happy is an important point in her own character, which becomes a subtle jab at those who would dislike her sanctimonious attitude and still find Taichi's final choice dislikable.

V.VII.V.II.III Youko Is/Was (also) an Animal

Same as above, except there was a physical representation of Youko: an animal, a dog or more likely a cat, which Taichi chases not literally but *philosophically*, finding the ability he believes (incorrectly) it has to *stand alone* to be admirable, a concept he generalized from the love for his dead mother.

But eventually, the animal being literally *not human* begins to corrupt this image in his already frail mind, leading to his ambition of becoming as one of them, and ultimately most of the above.

Perhaps the animal survived the Shinkawas and was adopted by Taichi in Kamisaka; perhaps it died and was replaced, maybe multiple times; perhaps it stayed just in Taichi's mind; perhaps it was originally killed by the Shinkawas as another sick joke, which made him snap.

...and maybe he has the more or less rotten carcass in the Taichi Bag...

V.VII.V.II.IV Youko is the Embodiment of Taichi's Sexual Desire

Among the many oddities of Youko there's how she can dominate Taichi's sexual desire to near perfection. In fact, she can do so *on her first try* which, even assuming she was trained on the subject of blowjobs, appears fairly unbelievable by the standards of a story that doesn't stop the twists and turns for something as simple as sex scene tropes.

Even Taichi seems more than taken aback:

My pleasure,
and my pain as well,
are her obedient sycophants, their original master estranged.
CCC0000

And then we come to the Sendback route. Setting aside possible writing issues[ccxlii], it's sort of odd that Taichi takes drugs for days at a time, somehow manages to avoid coming despite being said to be super sensitive at that point, and only releases when Youko says so. And when he does:

My head felt refreshed and clear,

because yesterday, yeah, yesterday, I had spurted out everything.
When sexual desires leave, rationality returns.
In that sense, it could be said that Youko-chan has made a mistake.
CCD5001

As with the chains not being real, so would the drugs: they're just a manifestation of Youko, his own sexual desire, clamping down on his pleasure to torture him[ccxliii]. If so, the ejection of Youko from the Cross World would also be a renunciation of physical or at least sexual desires, and bizarre as it sounds for an eroge to have *that* as punchline, there's comparison with this in Yutaka as well as Sakuraba:

Sakuraba: "Nah, being without strong sexual desires is for the best for a spontaneous human like me."
CCC4016

This was what happened after Taichi smacked him. After all, he *was* trying to rape a guy he just met. Youko not existing, incidentally, explains why he didn't fall for her: Taichi simply played every role back then in the theater.

As for Yutaka:

[H]e has a phobia of things with pointed ends[.]
CCC3007

On cursory glance that would look like a fear of needles; however, the term used is 先端 *sentan*[ccxliv], which is often used for the dick's head in typical sex scenes, here included. Given his backstory, which has little to do with needles and plenty with *rape*, the idea that it's fundamentally sexual has grounds.

Both Yutaka and Sakuraba put their sexually problematic past behind them; it's perhaps time for Taichi to do the same, along with their embodiment Youko. Certainly, if Taichi wishes to live alone, he has to leave something of the physical behind.

V.VII.V.II.V Youko Died in an Accident on That Day

There's an inconsistency in Taichi's story with regards to the Shinkawa massacre:

And then, the day of action.
14 dead.
CCD0023

...except there were *thirteen* dead, not **7**x2=14 dead, as Yutaka survived. Most of the story is set way after Taichi is aware of this, and so is the quoted script: so why does he say 14 when that was not the case? One simple answer: there were actually 14 dead and two survivors[ccxlv], but Youko was among the dead and Yutaka the other survivor.

In short, Youko was a real girl, and she really existed and everything that happened up until the massacre, at least, was real. There have been many hints already, but her pushing down Taichi and imposing herself on him was nothing short of rape: that's why the most consistently repeated script in Taichi's life tends to be that scene.

And then, on the day of the massacre she died in an accident, likely in one of the traps they set up. The shock of that event completely wrecks Taichi:

Well then, a murderer...
Can I do this, and skillfully?
I was crying.
I must wreck.
I must wreck, or I won't be able to murder people!
CCD0022A

...except this event happens *before* the murders. This wrecking is therefore in two parts. First, he snaps to start murdering; maybe he's seen her dead already, maybe he hasn't. Regardless, he begins to take on her as a personality: that's why he begins speaking about "us" right afterwards, when there's no hint in those odd flashback scenes that Youko is anywhere near him as he goes around killing everyone.

The second part is when the deed is done, and he sees her there (possibly once again), stock still, terror in her eyes: the weight of what he has done adds to his refusal to accept her death and results in the rest of the breakdown, the losing color of his hair, and fully taking on Youko as a split personality.

He cannot accept this absurd and seemingly random event and rather prefers to blame her for "no longer moving" and "doing nothing" at the massacre rather than admit this absurd reality. As what Youko did to him was still rape and exploitation for the goal of murder, something from which there is no return, whether he is precise in recalling the sequence of events doesn't really matter.

The rest plays out similarly to all the above, since he is still too broken to be truly among people, with the only significant changes in the Miki route and the Youko Sendback. In the Miki route, the odd absence of Youko is rationalized by Taichi as her random and unexplainable death in a trap because he's patterning himself against the past, unwittingly remembering the truth of those events; the ensuing deaths of the members of the Club nothing but Taichi beginning to repeat the consequence of that event.

The Youko Sendback route, being a less romanticized replay of what she did to him in that week before the massacre, becomes an acceptance of sorts that what Youko did to him not after but *before* the massacre. And very much a form of forgiveness for her, all things considered.

V.VII.V.II.VI Taichi Killed Youko on That Day

Similar to the above, but with one difference: rather than dying on a trap, Taichi snapped at her inability to follow through and murdered her. Unable to accept this, he truly breaks and takes on the Youko personality, with whom he has a very difficult relationship given he doesn't want to confront either her rapist behavior and inability to follow through, nor how his murders include hers.

The redone Youko route bad ending suggest this about as strongly as the Miki route suggest the accident. Every person in the Club is paralleled with someone from the Shinkawas, in a way that also suggests many events were

also patterning against the past (the death in bed, the building of a tower of bodies, the assault in the bathroom); in the part where Youko is killed, the parallel given is with Yutaka:

One special person.
There was a special need to 'remove' him.
CCD0022A

The gender is specified in the Japanese, so it's not ambiguous – but Yutaka did not die. This mini-scene is the most obviously deranged of all, and ends in a bizarre section of full-screen text that hints *someone* was very brutally killed.

Now, the mini-scenes are always prefaced by brief notes on how the people of the Club would have died at his hands, with the last line of the notes and the mini-scene being identical and indicating Taichi's patterning. The one for Yutaka would be Youko's death:

6) Concerning Youko-chan.
She did not pose resistance.
[*after the mini-scene*]
He did not pose resistance.
CCD0022A

The change in gender is sort of conspicuous, but not as much as the reprise of this after an inexplicable dimension jump:

Youko-chan posed almost no resistance.
CCD0022A

This further hints that the person killed there was in fact Youko. He begins with Yutaka, but then switches to Youko at an unknown moment of that part, perhaps after thinking he's sort of dispatched him, and then accidentally looking off at Youko and seeing her as he says.

The final part of interest here comes in Another Story, when Taichi, deranged, kills Youko:

Youko: "...you....."
She stares fixedly at me.
Youko: "Yes... you can't come back anymore."
Taichi"Uh!.....even if you make such a cryful face"[ccxlvi]
Youko: "You don't have long either... you lost even the strength to live as a person... will you be drawn to death, or will you be killed by coincidence?"
Taichi: "Ah, this doesn't really mean I hate you or anything, Youko-chan, OK?"
Youko: "Really?"
Taichi: "Of course. I love you!"
Youko: "If you do... then embrace me. Gently."
CCZAS

This dialogue is very perplexing, starting from how Youko doesn't use Taichi's name as pronoun (which I generally kept as it establishes the character as much colder and distant than it may seem); on its face, Youko understands that Taichi has broken well and fully, but is so out of whack herself that she misreads Taichi's psychotic standard eroge lines and runs straight into his arms, like they were any dumb Syrupple.

This continues to make zero sense in considering Another Story as taking place in a fully parallel world, because this event makes much more sense if assuming that Youko was actually killed by Taichi back then. This would be the dialogue that happened at that point, if more or less literal due to the RPG/eroge tropes in play here.

That "attraction to death or killed by coincidence" should remind of the Kiri and Miki routes: in the former he can choose death, in the latter he risks being killed by the same. It's especially interesting considering Youko is the only character that can be truly said to have been killed by coincidence, except maybe Tomoki.

And of course Sakuraba, but as he's the stand-in for Yutaka, he didn't die. In a sense.

V.VII.V.II.VII Youko Killed Herself on That Day

There's one last possibility when it comes to Youko having been real, but having died on that day of the massacre: she killed herself. Maybe she just snapped, but given the love for parallels in this story, maybe she realized what she had done and begged Taichi for forgiveness. The answer she got was the same he gave Yutaka's, and so would her reaction follow.

It would explain one last strangeness: Tomoki impaled on the antenna. That one is sort of off-pattern, but if Taichi was building this sinister Tower of Family and Youko decided to end it right there and then, that's where she would go.

V.VII.V.II.VIII Youko is S*omething Else*

The chase Taichi had at the beginning of his life, in the library, reading after this elusive perfect superman only he would or perhaps could see becomes here completely metaphorical. This chase for someone who would be his mother in the world of fiction, in his reality that was a fiction in itself, further makes figuring out whether Youko has ever existed even more difficult.

I prefer times where the tension can be kept high.
In times where it can't, my heart sinks.
To somewhere deep.
An abyss that sunlight doesn't reach.
A place that makes you forget all the light, that swallows whole all that desires but to live as an Individual.
A place where this thing called a heart is unnecessary.
Being there for long eventually makes this frozen heart degenerate into a pure volition to live.
There's this hallucination that I am as if something that lives deep beneath the seas.
That, I think, would also be good.
CCC3015

And there it is, the Abyss: Taichi, in his fake plastic world of solitude in the Mansion, kept sinking into this abyss. He stared so hard at it that, as Nietzsche warned, *something* stared back. Something which, like a bad cliché, told him to kill everyone.

And then keeps on living within him, waiting for the right moment to make him hers for all time.

For example, if I were to be by myself in this world alone,
I would have no need to hurt anyone.
CCC3015

But being alone would mean being alone with whoever and whatever you are, and in Taichi's case... see Youko Sendback.

This returns to the parallel with Nanaka: although her being pure hallucination is heavily implied by the author[ccxlvii], Taichi doesn't draw conclusions; if Nanaka were to be an actual manifestation, a ghost beyond merely Taichi's memories, then Youko similarly being a true *youkai* like her name recalls (and Taichi himself compares her to) is not something that can be dismissed.

V.VII.V.II.IX And So?

Which is the truth? Hard to say; personally, I'd discard the 'animal' possibility, combine the Female Personality and Sexual Drive into one, and simply make that a fertile bed for him taking over her as a split personality after her death.

The question then becomes only whether he killed her or it was an accident. But because Taichi blames himself so much, not erroneously by the way, and because the effects are identical even ignoring Youko as a split personality, the question of *what is the truth* is both unanswerable and ultimately unimportant.

At least, compared to the idea of Taichi having inside of him *something* that doesn't quite belong. As we'll see when we finally begin the thematic analysis, *that* is extremely important.

Let's call it part of the characterization twists, then: along with a tsundere that is in reality psychotic and possessive and a loli being the oldest character in the storyline for much of it, we have a split personality that's

never explicitly stated and the existence of which creates more questions than it seems to answer.

V.VII.V.III Youko's Effects on Taichi

Through looking at what Youko is it's possible to see what she represents, in general, to him. There are also other possible effects and consequences to Youko's presence in Taichi's mind, which could explain some odd leftover and dangling plot points.

V.VII.V.III.I Was There Even a Shinkawa Massacre?

While the Shinkawa massacre may appear to be the formative event of his youth, that's actually not quite correct: *Youko looking at him right afterwards* was. Or so he says, because him repeating what Youko did to him, the rape in which she attempts to make the two Alter Egos, strongly hints that what Youko did to him *before* was at the very least on the same level.

And then comes the question of the actual deed itself: since Taichi also "killed" everyone in Kamisaka by refusing to see them, and when he snaps he is doing nothing but repeating previous murders and waxing *suicidal*, not homicidal, *did Taichi actually murder anyone at the mansion?*

Because there's several facts that do not add up. Some have been seen all the way at the start, when examining the Hasekura Mansion as a World, but it's time to look at them closer.

I wouldn't know, as I've never seen a person ejaculate.
CCB2013

But Taichi was made to participate to the Shinkawas' sex feasts! How is it possible he never ever saw this? He saw a woman humiliated and repeatedly gang raped!

And every night her, and this still innocent boy I was, were patronized.
At best one could call it child abuse,
but it isn't like that.
CCD0023

This part is even more puzzling. So they were “patronized” - how? This is never clarified. What's known is that they were not sexually abused in the most straightforwards of meanings, as Youko and Taichi were both virgins when they made their contract.

And to the point where Taichi seems unable to even *conceive* of the concept of blowjob: how the hell did he witness a woman repeatedly sexually abused and fail to know what *that* is?

None of this makes sense, and even though I can admit parts of these as simply problematic writing, I must at least suspect that Taichi did not murder anyone. In fact, since Youko raped him, I have to wonder whether he is just projecting that behavior on everyone else.

Now, this doesn't necessarily make the Shinkawas nice guys; them not being rapists doesn't exclude them from being brutal, as we *do* see Youko and(/or) Taichi wounded. There's no doubt Yutaka himself was fairly nasty at least psychologically, if not physically.

But did Taichi actually murder everyone, or did he do what he did in Kamisaka, which is start to ignore everyone? Odd as it may be for the Shinkawas to send him off to Gunjou rather than toy with and murder him when e.g. he bumped into Yutaka and made him fell down the stairs without realizing it (zubaaan?) as he could not “see” him anymore, perhaps Taichi becoming completely non-reactive made him too boring to toy with – and totally broke Yutaka, as well.

The problem is that this would remove much of Taichi's guilt – *in theory*. But we'll see by the end that whether he murdered all those people or not, his *true* sin remains.

V.VII.V.III.II “Remove” - Is Youko the Censoring Filter?

Back in the first week we saw Taichi invite Tomoki to play a “game with the PC-98”. I used that as the name of Taichi's game, and this is where it's explained. It was already an odd coincidence that 1998 is the year Taichi

keeps hallucinating (at least) as being the current year, but it's now him putting Tomoki in charge of disk swap that is relevant.

Computer talk is used as euphemism for Taichi's split personality, this we've seen; given that Tomoki just asked Taichi to get Youko on the job, being in charge of disk swap becomes very suggestive: him disk swapping Taichi is *exactly* what's happening [ccxlviii] .

This talk of computers, and its association with Youko, continue to hint that the way he was "rebuilt" after the massacre was with RPGs and eroge, perhaps nothing more than those.

Now, if “the 98” (year and computer) is where the game is played, then what part of the program is Youko? This reconnects to the previous chapter, where we saw that not only Youko did nothing at the Shinkawa massacre, there might have been no massacre at all. And so:

Because at her foundation there are either removal or ignoring all the way through.
CCC0041

Remove or *ignore*. With the Shinkawas, she failed to remove and very much so. And so we reconnect to the possibility above: no massacre but *ignoring*. This behavior of Youko's becomes less perplexing considering this possibility, given Taichi's flashbacks to what happened to the mansion:

Youko: "...want it removed?"
Sudden words.
They are absorbed into the still quietness in the intervals between the periodic sound of slashed air.
But inside my ears, they linger for a long time,
together with their horrifying meaning.

Youko: 『Taichi... want it removed?』

Youko: 『I will remove it for you, yes.』
CCC3005

and

Ahhh, those are her "remove" eyes.

Youko:『What are you afraid of, then? Want me to remove what you're afraid of?』

All the things I dislike get 'removed'. By her. Always.
They simply and completely vanish from the world.
CCC3019A

All he dislikes gets removed. The focus on the eyes. Vanishing from the world.

Except, as later shown, the Shinkawas were never touched by her: her being his *censoring filter* would explains why Youko seems utterly incapable of seriously hurting Kiri, why Misato stays where she is when she annoys Taichi at the beginning, why she's mysteriously missing when Sakuraba attacks him[ccxlix], or why Touko remained when she got too sticky, not to mention Yutaka himself, but let's say that's what the Hasekura massacre was about.

In light of this, how does she “remove” things for him, and what did she ever remove for him? This question, like the existence of a split personality, appears to have no answer; but her being the censoring filter, the one that ignores things for him, the part of the personality that gets burdened with the garbage, so to say, makes for an answer.

That's why she “drives” him to Touko's mansion, when there's no need to (it's closer to Gunjou than Taichi's house, and he goes there normally in the Miki route when she's dead), to cover up how he's very possibly not going there at all but more likely going to the infirmary.

That's also why she says there are diaries discussing the worse endings, but that she "hid" them, diaries that then later just turn up at the hokora without explanation – with Taichi also having forgotten all about the hokora, although with even *less* explanation.

Whether Youko is the source of censoring, there are further implications that this is what Taichi does to others, not murder. This is Taichi at the end of his wits late in the Miki route:

My interest in her is vanishing, isn't it?
Kiri: "...your eyes... are not the eyes of a human."
She talks about my eyes.
Is this even some kind of attack?
Yeah, it's an attack.
Should I just flip that switch, then?
Shouldn't I, now?
...if she is an enemy.
I look at Kiri.
Should I just delete this?---
CCC4014

Focus on the *eyes* once more – and he's kidding himself, of course it's an attack, and a nasty one for him – together with the computer term 'delete'. But it's the “interest in her” vanishing that's important, as that's exactly what he says happened between himself and Yutaka:

Taichi: "I ended up seeing him like... a thing."
CCC3030

All that happened as consequence is that he told him to kill himself. Even considering she was hammering his berserk buttons, was he ever intending to do more than that to Kiri?

It's of course very possible that this is just a similarity between the two, that both Taichi and Youko ignore what they don't like around them. It would fit this:

Taichi: "There's all sorts of types that get put into classes. The type who can't understand your language, the type who doesn't see what's around them, the type that fires into rage suddenly, and the damnably normal-ish types."
CCC3004

Misato with her more or less ditziness-induced refusal to understand Taichi's perverted words and Miki with her inability to understand what others do are the first; Kiri and Touko are the third; Sakuraba and Tomoki would be the last. Balance then says both Youko and Taichi be in the second category, and things become tougher to understand given how Youko is very much certainly playing along with his delusions; in fact, the idiotic error she makes in that MWI scene hints that if she's not a split personality[ccl], then she has to be about as educated as he is.

So the Ignoring may just be another thing he may have copied from her as he took her on as an alternate persona; the influence he received on this would be irreversible, however, as humanity doesn't reappear after Taichi ejects her.

Nothing gets fixed in fact: there's no easy solution to problems in this story.

V.VII.V.III.III The Cause of Blood Fear

There's an oddity that runs throughout Miki's route that's easy to miss when considering everything else that's happening: Taichi becomes completely or nearly-completely insensitive to blood. He sees blood in many situations, yet never snaps - in fact, he often doesn't have any reaction at all.

Here's the complete list:

- Miki is torn-up after rescuing Kiri.
- Youko is seen dead;
- Touko is seen dead, and with plenty of bleeding;
- Misato's blood splatter;
- Tomoki's gruesome death;
- Kiri's stomach pierced, coughing up blood.

The only one he mentions at all is the first, which is the only one that comes before he sees Youko dead. He has minimal reaction, mostly to the smell, but he says it's thanks to the rescue itself:

A friend was rescued.

The heart did not throb.
CCC4006

This fits what's seen in Week 1 in the infirmary scene – *too* well, in fact, since Taichi becomes capable of standing to look at blood shortly after he tells his (possible) split personality to leave:

And then I gave medical care to Senpai.
This time, no seizure occurred.
Because I was happy.
Because... that high-ranking emotion was there.
CCA0017A

And there we come to the point: Taichi's reaction to blood vanishes after Youko's known moment of death. He still 'smells' her blood when he goes to find the body, but after he is certain she's “dead”, his fear of blood vanishes entirely and is never even mentioned again.

Is it her who controls this fear of blood of his? If so, either the psychological influence is unbelievably strong or, more likely, it's another hint that she's just a part of his mind.

V.VIII Kurosu Taichi - Conclusions

Much has been said at this point, but with a character this complex in its interrelations to the rest of the cast, there's certainly more things to mention with regards to Taichi himself.

V.VIII.I Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Or rather, the way he covers it up and why. Vomiting pseudo-Nietzschieanism is not the only way of coverup that he knows and uses:

Touko: "That's not disgusting! At least, as far as outwards you three stooges can be looked at."
Taichi: "...don't you include me."
Touko: "Oh no, are you still playing ugly duckling?"
Taichi: "Shaddep!"
This is a serious problem!

My self-deprecating routine is there to cover for it somehow.
Sure... this might not be a problem of looks at all but...
I can understand that as much as I like, but completely changing one's way of thinking is not so simple.
CCB2007

This is the scene right before he goes to flip Touko's skirt in the streets. It's a refuge in sexual audacity, and the purpose of that is said:

I was prepared to get beaten, anticipated it even.
CCB2007

And that's why he goes for his behavior: *he desires punishment*. That's why he dislikes Touko when she's too dere: she won't hit him; that's why he dislikes Youko: she *never* reacts; that's why he goes so far to antagonize Kiri: she *always* reacts, and hard.

This ties back to his belief that reciprocal touch is, in a sense, hurting each other – although the psychological subtext is obviously problematic, but Taichi not quite understanding how to deal with people isn't exactly a secret.

This continues in the scene on the rooftop (set before he discovers Touko "dead" and the bathroom scene), which is played largely for laughs *except* for Taichi:

Being rejected by people is truly heartbreaking innit...
Sometimes, I just stop understanding why I keep putting on all this buffoonery.
But I got no aim except to be a being loved by everyone, like the hero of a tale, nothing else!
Well, I often exaggerate things a slight bit, and it's true that there's also a side of this that's a caricature, but...
There is... but... dunno...
CCC3018

Desire for acceptance, threats of moral blackmail, impossible goals, inadequate admissions of errors, and perseverance on the wrong road. Splendidly *human* in all its irony. And yes, he's definitely exaggerating and caricaturing: saying without saying.

Even in the bathroom scene itself he was waxing on his looks right before taking it on Kiri:

Is this sorrowful thing the truth then?
Is the value of a human in the looks?
I'm always being called 'cute' and 'adorable' and all that... are they all lies, then?
White hair. Pupils with a peculiar iris. Nose maybe a little crooked.
CCC3018

And ironically, Youko *does* have a reaction in this scene; not to his provocations of *her* but to his provocations of *someone else*.

And this is where the connection back to Youko comes, specifically in the concept of how she might just be his sexual instinct. Back in the rooftop scene before the bathroom scene:

I hang my head.
My p0n00 was out.
[…]
And furthermore, didn't it grow all twangy in ecstasy because I was being emotionally oppressed! Of course, I'm a masochist.
CCC3018

The real reason is his evident sexual desire, which was exhibited by Miki (whom he educated himself), exacerbated by his background as a masochist, and further compounded by his own lack of attention and immediate assumption that he is the one to blame, as he keeps doing:

Taichi: "Even then, why did you go and strip off the lower half of the body... me."
[...]

Taichi: "Wasn't it because I become Full Throttle that my Martianhood was discovered?!"
CCC3018

In a sense, it was. In the sequence, he was barking orders left and right, until "Misato knocked him out" (more likely he went narcoleptic), followed by a fairly excessive prank by someone he trained to be fairly excessive.

In all of this, Sakuraba consoling him in a really weird way further hints at an interpretation of the story where Taichi, in the end, doesn't so much reject the physical world (that would be a simple suicide) as much as thirsts for something greater than it.

V.VIII.II Taichi is a Terrible Liar

It's hard to understate how truly *awful* Taichi is at making things up, despite the 98 Game being a comparatively tough nut to crack; then again, in it Taichi isn't so much lying as more or less conspicuously refusing to give important details. But when he is lying, he pushes out crap like:

Taichi: "NoNnoNno, I may be a Komusou , but unprincipled, really!"
Taichi: "Putting me side by side with that sort worries me!!!"
When I'm desperate to deceive, my Emergency Jokes are endlessly lame.
CCA0011A

Or:

Taichi: "Using some of the wiring of that antenna over yonder, you did a little naked limbo dance photoshoot with your crotch facing my direction."
CCA0016

And yet both of these *work*, because Misato also has a serious self-worth problem: the first one is in response to Taichi manhandling her, and the way she asks whether he is unprincipled has her worthlessness as subtext; in the second one, she has little difficulty believing she'd act like a complete slut when out of it: it's why she seeks, like Taichi, punishment for what she did. But it won't work with Taichi.

Her brother is just as bad:

Tomoki: "...what're you two doing together?"
Taichi: "We were picking edible wild plants."
CCD1001B

This is simply silly, but Tomoki hearing his sister is in trouble is enough to make him jump.

And curiously, it's not just him who pulls this sort of really lame stuff:

Shinkawa: "Ah... no way, my period's begun. I gotta put on a pad, so in the while you two get chatting will you?"
CCC3004

The influence that Yutaka had on Taichi, from this to the 'quality levels' and beyond, added with the similarities Yutaka has with Tomoki (the level of jokes, the low level of complaining) and the possibility there was no Massacre actually puts some sort of doubt on whether Yutaka was actually bullying him, or whether all along their relationship was a colossal misunderstanding closer to what was going on between Taichi and Kiri.

V.VIII.III Taichi Thinks He's an Animal

Or at least, wishes to be one that's pretending to be human. The general metaphor is cat or dog, especially the latter. That's how his alternate personality behaves:

In... the part that is bleeding... I saw toothmarks.
CCA0016

Which is even more interesting considering he claims Youko is herself some ferocious beast.

And when Miki asks:

Dogness was already attained at the exact moment in time she said "like a dog".

CCC4012

Which is also how he humiliates him in the corridor scene that soon devolves into a reading key for their game, when she asks him to strip.

And now, compare him pulling on Touko's swimsuit with this iconic image, which becomes oddly ironic considering he makes her act like a dog for losing at chess.

There's many more details regarding animals, from Misato having a 'pet name' for him, to making Touko bark when she loses at chess; the cicadas being missing may mean something very different in this sense. After all:

People are essentially alone, or so I read somewhere.
Any living creature could be said to be that,
but to be aware of it is only for people.
And I end up thinking that, among living creatures, insects might have the highest degree of perfection.
CCX0001

And that's why the metaphor is generally *cat or dog*, but there's plenty of wishing to be an insect. He's not even satisfied with the exact animal pretending to be a human the he erroneously thinks he is!

V.VIII.IV The Sex Scenes

If Taichi has an intracranial Photoshop, as said, it may be he has an intracranial Premiere and all or most of the sex scenes are his hallucinations. It's not necessarily so, however, and these scenes may even be hints of the nonexistence of the time loop – namely, in how few hints there are of the virginity of heroines not so much in the base routes (where it's justifiable in it being the actual first time for them), but in Sendback.

With Touko intentionally avoided and Kiri being left ambiguous, there's only two girls that get a sex scene in Sendback: Misato and Miki. Misato's first sex scene is quickly skipped over, and there was little emphasis on her virginity in that scene anyway; it's odd how she says she gave him her body "once", rather than at least twice, but rhetorical exaggeration and the

possibility that the non-Sendback scene was imagined (and many many many times!) puts her still in the plausible field.

The other is Miki, who gets this very suspicious line:

I'm sure blood came out.
I'd rather not see that.
CCD4003

...and of course he doesn't look, but there's another reason why he wouldn't want to: because she might not be a virgin at all, which would break the facade fairly thoroughly. She never ever mentions her virginity in Sendback, despite making it a running gag with her until the end of her route, making it even more suspicious.

There's also the issue with the repeating of routes, but that would be an issue in a world without the loop anyway. The answer to all is simple: Taichi is having lengthier flashbacks in his safe mental world. And who knows how many times he's repeated a route before going to interact with anyone else again...

Continuing with the *Youko is sex* theme:

It felt like a bomb was buried deep inside my hips,
and that I wanted to dislodge it.
I wanted to expel it all out.
CCD4003

As seen with the Misato Sendback about Tomoki, the *bomb inside* he uses to describe the 'problem', which is once more seen as sexually related.

The final thing of interest is a little detail that ties back to the theme of animals and men: *every single sex scene* in the normal routes is doggie style, the copulation of animals; *every single sex scene* in Sendback is face-to-face, the copulation of humans. This is certainly no coincidence.

V.VIII.V Sight and Hearing Problems?

That Taichi is ignoring the world is as proven as it'll get within the confines of something as perplexing and vague as Cross Channel, but there's also the possibility that his problems are *physical*: his eyes are described as having a plausible and more or less serious issue, and he himself claims his supernatural abilities came instead of actual blindness.

He has no supernatural abilities, however, so the question is whether he actually has more or less serious, and possibly degenerative, physical issues. Outside of the eyes, however, we'd have little in the way of hint – the strongest ones are the parallels between characters. The time loop and Yutaka's narcolepsy already hint at his difficulty with focusing mentally; Yutaka's physical issues point at declining physical health; Sakuraba's deafness suggests decreasing listening capacity; and Touko's malnutrition and blindness continue in this direction.

Both father and mother he hints as having died young, although there is only one and possibly joke line (which mentions everything from the very fictional Jemand's Disease to AIDS) that hints this passing was due to bad health.

And then, if Youko was always fictional, the parentage he describes as hers may in fact be his.

Unfortunately we now enter the realm of pure speculation, as there's simply not enough information to do anything but that. The wildest theory would be that the murdered couple of servants were either his own parents, whose deaths he moved to 'later' in his misremembering, or simply that their violent deaths were similar to what his parents had to go through.

It's never said what the Hasekuras do, exactly, but given the disgrace (not necessarily death) of the head brings a side family into the mansion, it's easy to suspect that it was a mafia family, with a noble if still not exactly nice old guard replace by the more violent Shinkawas, not an unknown event (or at least plot line) even in the West.

All it would take is for one or both of Taichi's parents to come from the wrong families, or simply belong to the right family at the wrong moment

for either or both to be at risk of violent death. That would also explain why Nanaka was hiding in the darkness alone: she was on the run by the people who would kill her, and perhaps did.

V.VIII.VI White Dressed as Black

Being that he believes his looks immediately mark him as a monster, Taichi is all about attempts at covering up. But *what* he covers up is monstrous largely if not entirely in his mind: he's the only one that's really bothered by his looks all the way throughout.

Yutaka points his hair out, but that's because he's remembering him; Miki also does, the first time they meet, but only because he obviously lied about dying them; even Kiri, when she points out his eyes, is largely concerned with the way he looks *at* people than with their actual shape.

It's been mentioned and it's hopefully already visible that Taichi's spewing of pseudo-nihilistic babbling is there to cover not some horrible black sewage underneath, but a truth he won't or can't accept: this is the reading key for the way he covers things up.

The verbal sewage and the hair color mix just before the Kiri bathroom scene:

I did intend to dye,
but hair growth is quick.
White invades from the hairline, all at once.
Whenever I look at that ashen that desires to be seen through the black hair,
I realize:
this never goes beyond the ornament,
and that I am, right then, nothing more than something decorated.
CCC3022

He thinks this is something horrible, but read close: he is *white*, and can't be *black*. The metaphor is so blatant it's almost easy to miss: Taichi resents that he can't look the monster he claims he is. He even tries to make white into black and viceversa: when he erroneously points out that his white hair can help with sunstroke, he is asserting that his white reflects light. Technically

true, but not something that would help in that case, and therefore ultimately a delusional grasping at straws.

This once more ties back to his desire for punishment, and well represents his depressive and self-critical attitude. His coverups are therefore at best equal to the crime, if not worse: when he wears the gas mask in front of Miki, he is certainly far more terrifying than he is without it. And yet, Miki doesn't even flinch.

This reflects not just in his coverups, but in nearly every coverup in the story. First and foremost, the safe in his room: it's hidden behind a wall panel in the back of his closet and locked with his name (and that's a hint if there ever was one!). It's also guarded by decoy porn books, which he leaves in relatively easy to find places (top of the desk, under the bed).

But while the *decoy* is porn, *so is the content of the safe* . What is hidden and what is used as misdirection are *one and the same* . And then Touko, one of the most (superficially) stupid characters in the story, finds the Great Big Secret without even trying: this represents how Taichi is simply not fooling anybody but himself with this shtick... and perhaps most of the audience.

This is even more blunt in the coverup he makes of the Club Room: he pastes what should be really really obvious inkjet prints in the window towards the outside. Anyone looking even more than cursorily should be able to see, especially if there's loud talking inside: yet the incredibly obvious facade lasts for at least one year, unnoticed.

V.VIII.VII A Big Damn Error

All throughout the analysis of the various characters, and hinted all the way back from the beginning, there has been an underlying thread of Taichi committing a kind of *error*. This is best seen with him trying to 'format' his relationship with Touko: *he tried to take back the past*. The whole of the time loop is nothing but this, and so is his constant attempt at performing previously successful patterns over again. Even him wanting Youko to let him go back to what he was is part of this.

And that he still recriminates this to her at the end of her Sendback route, barely before the ending, makes it obvious Taichi *still* hasn't quite learned that this is his error. Things cannot be taken back. This error fades into another: he believes it's possible for a human being to truly sit outside and above the world, without any need for others:

Taichi: "People like you who exist at the very summit don't want anything as degenerate as love!"
CCD5001

This is part of why he resents Youko, especially her jealousy as seen after the bathroom 'rescue'. Her somehow *needing* him for the massacre was also the instantaneous shattering of the image of someone he thought perfect, but also a shattering that he does not seem to understand rationally.

Regardless, her rape was as devastating if not moreso than her inability to magically revert time to make it so things were back to what they were before, with the event in the middle somehow not having influenced him.

That's what he means when he says that he wishes she had discarded him:

Taichi: "If only I had been released by you, and let me go back to what I was, that alone would have satisfied me."
[…]
Taichi: "But why, why didn't you just cut me off and cast me away on that very spot?"
Taichi: "That's the one question I really want to ask."
CCD5001

This is where the two errors fully combine into one: what Taichi desires is for *something human who has the ability to take things back*. But that is no more possible than growing up outside of the influence of others, or making these others into “safe” friends by draining their blood. Still, he desires this and so he loses himself in the time loop.

But in his error, Taichi hits on something very interesting: *the facade holds*. People *do* keep repeating the same stuff over and over and over. While the

past can't be taken away – the notebooks remain – what is being *done* is the same thing, over and over and over, with minimal variations. Sometimes there's tragedy, sometimes there's some happiness, but it all fades away to repeat over and over and over.

And this is what finally becomes the source of desperation for Taichi: nothing is new under the sun, all has been done, and as long as he's within this system, nothing will change except that his sins will keep piling up to the sky. That's where his personal heaven turns into a personal hell.

That is when Taichi decides to follow a completely new path, one that hasn't even been hypothesized, one that should not even be *possible* – not without a something "extra" that exists only next to the hokora, that only he sees, few others even conceive, and none fully understand if at all.

And if things cannot be taken back, Misato and Tomoki hint, that doesn't leave one thing that can be done: let them be. *Forgiveness*.

This will be the lead-in for the deepest themes of Cross Channel.

VI Interpretative Layers

The questions left to approach in Cross Channel are no longer many, fortunately, but among the remaining one is the biggest of all: *why?* Why construct this big puzzle without even giving a hint that it is so? And what does it all *mean*?

The first difficulty here is that Cross Channel *can* mean multiple things, and while the author doesn't seem too bothered that people don't see deeper into the story [ccli] , there are multiple and *largely* meta-complete interpretative layers to Cross Channel.

Fortunately, these exist more or less on top of each other, each leading, hinting or outright requiring what's below them; some layers don't seem fully examinable by themselves, as we've seen the Secession and Public Sex Play rooftop scenes don't quite fit as snugly with the interpretation seen so far.

Now, a reader may want to stop at any time, or simply lack the interest, knowledge or intellect to get deeper, and it may not be authorial intent to spur them beyond that; of course the point of this monograph is to go to the very depths, and those depths are surprising for what is fundamentally a porn game from Japan.

The second and greatest difficulty is that the meaning of things, as well as the facts *themselves* , change between interpretations. Youko is real in one, Taichi in drag in another, a demonic presence in another one, a purely psychological phenomenon in yet one more; the time loop is an unexplained sci-fi event in one, a hallucination in another, an allegory in a third.

The question that typically is asked in these circumstances is *which one is the truth?* And the answer is both simple and typically harder for most to 'get' than even much of what has gone before: *all of them, within their interpretative layer* , although (more or less fortunately) I do believe there is an “ultimate” interpretation that overshadows *but does not eliminate* the other ones.

This is where the relatively straightforwards narrative line of Taichi's big game is no longer sufficient, or rather, where it reaches its conclusion as merely one of the most interesting interpretative layers to follow along.

VI.I Layer-I: The Bland Interpretation

A bunch of really broken young boys stumble via sci-fi into an alternate world of no people and time loop. The characters look perfectly fine Japanese anime/manga stereotypes, but it turns out they're actually not quite right in the head. The most insane of them somehow up and decides to send them back, because he doesn't like how things are going, and then lives there alone forever. The end.

Needless to say, if this is all that Cross Channel was, it would barely be worth a single reading, let alone analysis. It'd be a simplistic and reductionist twist-based quasi-romance novel, full of plot holes and things happening for no real reason with no real explanation – not to mention no real ending.

Honestly, how someone could read it at this level and somehow praise it would be beyond me; but Cross Channel's strengths show through even at this level: there is *something* greater than this in the characters, who are far more complex not just than first appears, but even on second look, and especially compared to the characters in most if not all other Visual Novels out there.

After all, this very monograph would not exist if I hadn't read the story, found it fundamentally lacking, and yet being slowly forced to conclude that there was *something* to it that was just not visible at first look, which spurred a quest for understanding that culminated here.

VI.II Layer-II: The Troll Interpretation

The simplest twist of all: Taichi and the rest fall into the Cross World with no explanation, but rather than send people home or anything, he snaps, murders everyone, and buries them at the hokora so they will never return after the loop. That, or they were all dead all along.

This would explain why he hears voices haunting him right at the end discussing “bloody splatter”.

Or, going by Another Story, he just hallucinates the whole story as he slowly goes insane in the last moments before his death or disappearance, long after he has murdered everyone as mankind disappears for reasons unknown.

In short, it's a cruel, twisted and purely meaningless story, as nihilistic as it gets. But the hallucination parts are not quite incorrect; in fact, they are a hint.

VI.III Layer-III: The Complicated Interpretation

This is what has been examined for most of the monograph: a story far more complex and far more difficult to understand than appears, requiring extensive research, careful reading, hundreds of cross-references and not a bit of cultural *and* extra-cultural understanding, given the writer has no problems playing off the expectations of readers in a linguistic sense as well.

But even all this doesn't answer the question *why*. This puzzle can't be all there is; too many things remain yet unexplained despite it all. What's with the hokora, for starters?

VI.IV Layer-IV: The Meta-VN Interpretation

Not only is Cross Channel a Visual Novel itself, it's also a commentary and criticism on VNs themselves, their writing, their tropes, as well as a retracing of their history.

In this interpretation, there is no fourth wall: Taichi is talking directly to the reader most of the time. What's more, *he is aware of this* even though he isn't telling, not literally. In fact, most characters are more or less aware that they're nothing but characters in a story; the problem is that to *themselves* they are entirely real.

These people have been whisked into a half-real world where no one but them exists, as there's no budget for a much larger cast; as this world is divided in routes, every time protagonist Taichi reaches the timeline end of the story, the world resets and returns back to what it was at the start.

What remains are the scenes unlocked, the already read text, the choices already picked: the save file, which in this Cross World is represented by the hokora.

In all of this, Taichi is no completely innocent character. His backstory represents the transition between fairly low-key, fetishist but ultimately subdued low-erotic content eroge of the early period, out into a straight-up dark rape nukige. The story of Cross Channel represents a sequel to the bad end of such a nukige, where two of the side characters are pushed too far by the protagonist (clearly Yutaka in that case), and the ending is a massacre.

There's even mention in the Materials Book interviews of older FlyingShine/Ruf nukige Shokuzai no Kyoushitsu, which Tanaka would have been inspired by. Sadly those are quite difficult to get running, and while the anime they've inspired[cclii] do show some hints at interesting

concepts, they're unlikely to be sufficient for analysis, analysis that would get us too far off the point anyway.

It remains that Cross Channel includes one CG from Shokuzai no Kyoushitsu: Bad End, and a piece of music from the latter plays in the Deus Ex Chaos scene – itself the most explicitly meta scenario in Cross Channel with regards to VNs – as Taichi casually talks of *gangrape*.

The name of that music according to OGG metadata? *Shinkawa*.

After the Bad Ending, Taichi is turned into the blandest eroge protagonist imaginable: second year of high school, kouhai and senpai as love interests, a tormented backstory (if left initially unclear), very peculiar looks, feminine/androgynous look, extremely perverted but very shy when pushed.

And then, like any eroge post Key (or To Heart, at least), there come the magic powers and the supernatural events. The disappearance of mankind, itself, is constructed via a fairly blatant imitation of the way things work within some of the most influential works in Visual Novel history, specifically the works of Kinoko Nasu.

Taichi has Mystic Eyes that allow him to see in the dark, as well as to decide whether one is or isn't within the world he himself has created. That's what the Cross World is: a Reality Marble [cccliii] , ripped straight and forwards from Nasu's settings. The references are nowhere near over with that: besides a few anachronistic references to then-recent Melty Blood (as already mentioned), Taichi carries a knife [ccliv] and the concept of a looping dream world was explored very thoroughly in the Tsukihime sidestory *Kagetsu Tohya* [cclv] .

The concept of causality in *Tohya* is of particular interest: the world changes according not to the whims of the story, but according to what he claims he remembers; the protagonist's options expand depending on what he hears or remembers. For example, he may hear that the school's Cultural Festival was “soon”, and on the next loop, he can decide to remember that the cultural festival was that very day. All characters slowly begin to

recognize that something is wrong within this dream world, as well, though none decide to exploit its rules like Miki does in Cross Channel.

This would explain why Taichi's options increase suddenly and seemingly randomly in-universe, rather than simply being the consequence of completed routes unlocking more content (which, in a surprisingly rare one-to-one correspondence, is what happens in Cross Channel the VN).

Tohya also serves as inspiration in the tone of life within this universe with one of its extra stories, *Flowers of Thanatos*. In it, protagonist Shiki is stuck in the mansion with nothing but two characters, with whom he can have sex scenes.

Although the bulk is said sex scenes, all that surrounds it has the entire mood and atmosphere of Cross Channel: there is *literally nothing* outside of this mansion, it's an unexplained pocket universe, ever resetting, ever undying – and sex is *all* they can do for all of eternity.

It may be little more than a sex scene, but that endless nothing suggests that the people in it may eventually go mad, and perhaps they have. Cross Channel has a town, rather than a mansion, but the concept is the same.

There's even a scene in Cross Channel that may be a reference to that:

A notebook is given on gaining membership, and for every use a Princess Stamp is received.
The accumulation of stamps is the measure of how cheaply one can enjoy services such as the Double or the Triple.
...what's even a triple now.
What kind of world would be that?
Would it be Shangri-la?
And is the sun yellow?
CCA0008

From Wikipedia : *"Shangri-La has become synonymous with any earthly paradise, and particularly a mythical Himalayan utopia — a permanently happy land, isolated from the outside world"* . Since this is pretty much

about sex with Miki and Kiri (perhaps the rest) in a secluded world from which there is no escape and nothing to do but complete those routes over and over, the parallel should be clear [cclvi] .

In the flow of the story, Taichi decides that the endlessly repeating world with its pleasures but also with its many pains is not worth living in not for himself, but for the *others*, ejects them from his Reality Marble, and begins to speak *through* the fourth wall, directly to the reader (as well as the "real world" in which the rest of the characters really live), inciting them to live on, and then heading into the save file to avoid the reset that restarts the route, in order to never forget who he is and, somewhat ironically, still repeat this endlessly.

The ending is therefore anti-harem: instead of ending up with all the girls, he ends up with none, and not because of mutual rejection but because of separate and conflicting goals.

The entire story can be read as Taichi simply repeating the very storyline from the beginning as a form of performance play. The real story has played long ago, during the writing so to say, and all the reader can see is a replay of it through Taichi's mind. The choices the reader can make are almost entirely of sequence (which first) or irrelevant.

And so, the reader becomes the one who Taichi can Cross with, even though the two are forever separated from by the monitor, through which he can speak but cannot listen – one way, just like the antenna is, firmly establishing that the final message is simply a self-referential allegory for the whole thing.

That's why there's moments where we see static: that's Taichi's connection with us 'glitching' as he destabilizes, along with this connection. And it's this connection that would give name to the game: tuning into the Cross Channel is the action of reading the story. On running the game, the Cross World is established, and since the hokora has been emptied (no save file), the story needs to start from its beginning.

And so he will repeat the tale of how he understood what it is to be a human over and over and over for all that will listen, until the last copy of the game discs is gone, the last computer capable of running it has stopped working, or the story itself lies forever forgotten.

But this is where the interpretation begins to show its inadequacy: *this final message*. Where the concept of meta-visual novel is solid throughout, what Taichi *tells* people is not about, say, how bad it is to trap/be trapped inside a meta-construct, or anything remotely related to all this: the message is an apparently clichéd "please live".

In fact, much of the story itself has nothing to do with meta, strictly speaking; it's all about how Taichi learns to live his own life through the interaction with others and, given Youko and Nanaka (in other interpretations at least), through coming to terms with his own past. There is much still to go before that message will make sense.

There is another aspect of this interpretation, however, that is largely self-sufficient: that of VN criticism.

While Taichi's shtick is for the most part a pseudo-nihilism in surface with deeper meanings, a good chunk of this 'coverup' consists in borderline indecipherable tirades that sound random, but are on closer examination about characterization, balancing and pacing – to the point where they read like outright authorial filibusters. This propensity is visible in how Taichi keeps using the term 'Character Attribute' to identify characters' base stock personalities, as already seen.

The brunt of the criticism is made by Taichi, but even other characters aren't immune to this:

Misato: "It is best if you suitably reveal your past psychological traumas as you keep blurting out this kind of mimetic and onomatopoeic words, all while you act in ways easily understood such as making an embarrassed face or burning with jealousy!"

CCB0005

That would be the behavior of a fairly stock protagonist in a very stock VN.

The criticism itself is, as said, fairly difficult to decipher and best left for the script commentary, what little is possible to understand of it, but there is a direction and an underlying theme which ties back to Taichi's own pretentious and *apparently* vacuous pseudo-nihilistic tirades: the author is strongly critical of the kind of writing.

This is even more visible in the first week, which as said is written far higher to the point of more or less purple, where the rest is written far more accessibly; the majority of the difficulty of reading Cross Channel in the original Japanese is the hideous level of ambiguity that necessitates deep analysis.

That still ends up as part of the criticism, however: to see Cross Channel's truth is to find the depth *below* the pretentiousness. Those who read Cross Channel as a simple straightforwards story full of beautiful language and without any kind of 'mind screw' are ultimately ridiculed by the depths that lay beneath the text itself, forever invisible to that sort.

And if those people aren't seeing the depth in something like Cross Channel that *does* have it, what are they seeing in those texts – VNs or not – that *are* nothing but the mud-covered sewage that Taichi describes?[cclvii]

Lines like these:

Taichi: "I am a short-cutting imbecile who is exclusively enthralled by superficial antithesiiiis!!!"
CCC0045A

...told to Taichi right after another incomprehensible monologued tirade about how Nanaka is “miscast” in her role, and therefore nothing but a one-dimensional (and failed) twist on the character archetype, leave little to the imagination with regards to where the author is going with this.

And yet, like many concepts aren't exactly original or even exclusive to Cross Channel (Taichi's automatism and Fixed Patterns, for example),

characters *are* more or less complex variations on the stock; little to the imagination, but not nothing.

But these characters are so deep to analyze and offer so much not due to how many twists have been given to them or because of simplistic deconstruction, but because of something far more philosophically complex, which ties back to the quote that opens this book.

VI.V Layer-V: The Psychological Interpretation

Although fairly deep down as far as interpretative layers go, this is one of the easiest to see and the very first interpretation I gave to Cross Channel, long before spreading the study and seeing all else.

This interpretation expands on the concept of *friends are needed to grow a heart* to the maximum: the entire story becomes purely allegorical, and so does the cast. The character here is just one: an unnamed Person that exists exclusively at the meta-level, unseen; all the characters from the protagonist onwards are simply aspects of his personality, and the story develops with the interaction between them. The character routes represent the 'contact' with these deeper parts[cclviii].

The Cross World is the world of his mind: born of the intersection between two other worlds (i.e. a father and a mother), it exists separated from the real world by the same barrier that separates the mind with the physical world. It's a playground that resembles reality, but it's just the limited world that the Person interacts with – the map, not the territory – and one that has gotten into a big upheaval recently.

That's because the story itself at this level is not the typical life of the Person but an unspecified and very significant traumatic event for him, and he has withdrawn within this more or less fantastic internal world in order to deal with the aftermath of this.

The world itself is not indicative of the stage of life, nor the allegory definite on what this traumatic event is. Given how high school is one of the most defining moments in a Japanese's life[cclix], a return to this period could be from any age. The protagonist's issues with communication and the

coverup of that may mean a number of things, itself, but *coping* is and remains a fundamental aspect here.

Whether he's a troubled young boy coping with high school itself, a young man dealing with the difficulty of a post-high school world and all it comes with, or an old man dealing with the gradual disappearance of his friends until he's the last one alive of his circle, this side of the allegory is vague.

Not so the characters, which are fairly simple to analyze.

The part that deals with this and who narrates the story is Taichi, which is the Person's consciousness but *not* the Freudian concept of Ego or something similar; it's a much simpler super-construct representing the Person's inner flow of thoughts. Although represented as such, Taichi is *not* independent of the other personality aspects: changes inside and outside of them change what happens inside of himself as well. He is what I call a **compound** personality.

The rest of the characters follow a specific order, except for Youko, from *closer to the outside world* to *closer to the interior world* .

Misato is the **Workaholic**: she represents diving into the work at the expense of everything else. She also contains the rules and regulations imposed by the outside world, as well as the pull that said outside exercises on the Person. Her constructing the antenna is the Person's job, and the antenna itself represents interpersonal communication: a tedious and complex job that requires the collaboration of most other part.

Tomoki is the **Victim**: he's the part that gets hurt by the flight into work at the expense of everything else. He's the part that manages to act nice and normal in front of others, but underneath, he's resentful of interpersonal interaction and works to sabotage it.

Touko is the **Rage**: frustrated at a world that doesn't act quite as expected or things that don't progress in the way wanted, the Person rebels and shuts down. This rage is directed inwardly, however, and it's not going to be

common for the Person to explode in the face of others. That doesn't make this part any less troubled.

Sakuraba is the **Sense of Humor**: as a first reaction to this life so problematic, and an infancy more than a little troubled, the Person develops a cryptic, bizarre and perverted sense of humor. It's one that's not quite entirely well received, however, being that it's largely self-referential as the Person has a tendency to withdraw himself into an interior world. Without those references, the humor tends to be difficult to understand for others.

Kiri is the **Suicide**: Resentful of all the above, *especially* infuriated by the sense of humor, the Person turns his Rage inwardly until it grows into a desire for it all to end. This is a self-defense mechanism, however: there's a deeper understanding at this level that the 'fault' is not entirely to place on the Person, and that suicide is not the correct solution. That still makes it the only solution *recognized* as of the start of the story, however.

Miki is the **Hollow**: this is what the Suicide is protecting, the deepest part of the personality, what could be said to be the soul. That's why Miki is the one character outside Taichi that has the most visible references to the others; her Sendback runs the gamut from Yusa to Touko. This is where the traumatic childhood is most visible: because of the difficulties of the early period, the Person has grown up with a serious handicap when it comes to understanding and living with others. The world neither conforming to his erroneous expectations nor helping with changing this has made living feel pointless all the way to the core, which is the stimulus that ultimately generates the suicide impulse, however fought it may be.

Youko is the hardest one to tell, the one who initially gave me the most trouble, as well as the first lead out of a purely psychological interpretation. She is the **Humanity**: not something purely psychological, but something *automatic* and *intrinsic* in the human animal. She's the part of the Person that didn't grow, but was always there.

And, hardest to understand of all at first, while she is some kind of error, or tumor as the story itself considers it, she is *not* something that is exclusive to the Person, but something common to humanity. The perspective of

Cross Channel is that something is *fundamentally* wrong with mankind, regardless of how it can be worked around and in a sense surmounted, but never truly eliminated. This will only really be truly understandable starting from the next interpretation, however.

The world itself becomes allegorical as well, and the allegories are as straightforwards as with the characters. The school is the gathering point for the various personalities, becoming consciousness and awareness itself: when the Person is asleep, the personalities go to sleep in their own parts of the brain (or do they?).

Of the school, the part closest to the outside world is the rooftop, where the Workaholic is often found, working on the antenna that represents communication and interaction with the outside world[cclx], presented as a work that can be accomplished by them together but only with great expenditure of effort, and one that will eventually be wiped back to nothingness at the end. This is part of why it's so frustrating to keep interacting with humans: it can't be done once and for all, but it has to begin anew day after day.

This is a good opportunity to mention something that isn't quite visible anywhere else, not even in the translation: the presence of wind on the rooftop is also meaningful. The kanji 風 kaze, wind, also has the meaning of *pretense*. This is a hint of what's happening between Taichi and Misato in more straightforwards interpretations, because both of them are being quite deceitful in their behaviors and in the way they accept or ignore parts of each other's behaviors.

This is not limited to the rooftop, it has its own reading keys:

Miki was making a tranquil face.
There's certainly not a whiff of pretense of having disliked it.
CCA0008

That uses the kanji for *wind*. And when the arrow that kills Kiri flies at the end of her route, one possible reading of that line is “the pretense is

broken”. It's a very minor point that's nearly impossible to see outside of analysis even in the original, however.

This pretense is where the story begins: all looks ordinary, if somehow *too* ordinary. The enthusiasm is always present at the beginning, after all. But this Pretense is also a disturbance in the communication; it is something that initially makes Taichi and Misato incapable of communicating directly:

Her plump reddening lips begin to part as words begin to be formed.
A gust of wind near my ears drowned out what was but a murmur with its roar.
By the movement of her lips I knew what she had said.
CCA0006

This continues in the second week, and is in fact even worse:

If I strain my ears towards all that she is, the nickname for her only personal use is conveyed,
together with the movement of tender red lips.
This catching of a whisper in the midst of a squall in truth is nothing more than the Cocktail Party Effect, but still I lose myself in dreaming that some special peculiarity exists between me and Senpai.
CCB0005

In both cases, this demands Taichi (and indubitably Misato) to *make stuff up* and hear what they want to hear. And so we reconnect to the real-time editing of dialogue.

It may seem innocent, but it's from this second “week” that this disturbance begins showing itself problematic; whether retracing the previous steps or giving in to the growing frustration, the Victim shows up at the end, makes a mess of things, and the Hollow and the Suicide begin demanding that something radical be done about it, ending in madness and disaster.

Nothing of this will change, ordinarily: neither giving in to the Workaholic or to the Rage will produce any result – until eventually there's the consultation of the hokora, whether out of random curiosity or desperation.

The hokora contains memories, or rather, it contains banks of *fresh* memories; the Person, as was visible with Taichi as a character, has a problem with *recall* although not with memorization itself.

This however presents problems for a straightforwards interpretation, moreso than Youko. First up is Nanaka: although she's a manifestation of memories, and that's fairly obvious to see, *what* causes this is unclear. Second and most important, the act of consulting the hokora is itself puzzling. If the problem is recall, what causes the Person to have perfect recall at these times? It could be Nanaka, who points the Compound at the hokora, but this answer is circular.

There's other alternatives, however: the Hollow remembers, for starters, and remembers *everything*. That's what hurts: all the painful memories, all that went bad. All remains inside, never dealt with.

The hokora helps, however, and with it the Compound is able to 'deal' with the Suicide and then with the Hollow, which controls it. Something important changes at that point: the Hollow decides to *reset*. This is not the forgetting of memories – as it isn't in other interpretations – but *letting go* of the pain they cause. After all, memories cannot be erased, the hokora remains filled, and events keep happening.

This *letting go* continues to suggest that something greater is at hand here: there's no 'fixing' the memories, there's no making up for them, there's no hugging after defeating the common villain with the power of friendship, nor shrugging and going on regardless because that's life: there's nothing that is typical of stories that do this kind of thing[cclxi]. The approach is fundamentally different.

This doesn't fix anything; now that the Compound has learned to use the memories for himself, as the Hollow was, he realizes that making things perfect *inside his mind* is not going to work. He cannot construct a perfect sequence that will make everything work perfectly every time, not as long as he allows these memories (including the negative ones, which the Humanity had hidden) to grow distant again.

Once again, an oddity: it's not the memories themselves that help this, it's the *constant reminder* of them that does. And so he begins to reach out to the various personality constructs, ejecting them one by one in an act that is allegorical for *integration*.

These fragments now become fully a part of the Compound, and with that, slowly the Person drowned in this internal world begins to gain clarity. This is fairly visible in the Youko Sendback route, where Taichi begins to resort to other characters' personality fairly blatantly – with disastrous results when he accesses the Suicide's planning and the Sense of Humor's style of facade because he does not take the last issue he has in any way seriously.

This lets Humanity pin him down until he really goes down hard on how fearful and useless it has been when push came to shove, and this is yet one more oddity: although the *humanity* demands certain things be done, horrible things even leaving the massacre as allegorical for something else, it's not these base human impulses that *perform the act*. They can only tempt and stand watching, in horror, as people do what they tell them.

The integration is now complete, and fairly successful – in the appearance. That's because the various components were not entirely negative, but exist to help the Person deal with his issues, as hinted in their very description:

- The Workaholic knows how to put things together, understands the world's rules, and can dive into the job, all necessary things to live in the world.
- The Victim is a warning mechanism.
- The Rage a comprehensible frustration that cannot be merely quelled down without repercussions, as seen with Touko's 'deaths' and the impact they have: in the Kiri route that causes Taichi to assault Kiri herself, in the Miki route it's where Kiri begins to go crazy. The repression of the Rage causes the Suicide to flare up.
- The Sense of Humor is, well, just that. If it can be aimed correctly, that's all it needs.
- The Suicide knows when things are getting out of hand, and is simply misdirected by what's above and manipulated by what's below.

- The Hollow is the deepest part, the soul, and it needs to be filled in a different way .
- The Humanity is simply unavoidable if one wants to remain physically alive.

The Person definitely changes after this. The calm, ceaseless and Sisyphean assembly of the antenna represents a final understanding that communication is something that needs to be prepared and constructed every time, and not something preexisting that can merely be exploited as needed. He learns that lesson, at least.

But despite the change, this does *not* fix things entirely! There is one more crisis before that, in fact, it may be said that if everything that came before was strongly allegorical, the ending is *less* so, paradoxically: the story was *always* about a single person, after all. That crisis, therefore, is representative of events seen throughout the story.

What 'fixes' him, finally, is absolutely nothing. He is not 'fixed'. He never becomes 'fixed'. This is the ultimate anti-stereotype: after finishing his job, he needs to rush to the only religious building in the story at around 11 on Sunday to not forget everything, and the danger of making a mistake and "dying" (i.e. being unable to get this reminder) is behind every corner. There's no certainty he will succeed all the way to the end – whatever that may be.

Questions yet remain and are unsolvable at this level. Where did Nanaka come from and what is she? And given that Humanity eventually burns the content of the hokora, is the hokora *actually* the memory at least after that?

And why would someone wish for the sky to go away before his death? *How would that even work?*

IV.V.II Romeo Tanaka: An Issue of Family

Because of how fairly evident and inevitable, from a writing standpoint, that the Person this interpretation talks about is the author himself, together with a brief examination of previous (and a future) text, some

characteristics emerge with regards to him, his backstory, his propensities and his beliefs.

A difficult childhood is very easy to hypothesize; certainly not to the excessive extents of Taichi's, but even with him there's difficulty telling how much of that is real and exaggerated. The way the story is written hints at someone who isn't wallowing in self-pity, at the absolute very least.

The central concept is *parental abandonment* and a *desire for a new family*. This is well visible in the translated stories of his; Family Project, which centers pretty much on that, and the incestuous themes in Kana: Little Sister are very much difficult to miss. Both of those stories, together with Yume Miru Kusuri, concern or have protagonists that are more or less de-facto adopted.

Whether Tanaka himself was is difficult to tell, because this alienation is not atypical of blood-related families as well. The focus on the parentage reveals ze issue: ein problem mit hiz mozer. Gifen die abzence of fazer vigurez in Daichi's live--- *cough* sorry, Freud happens – given the absence of father figures in Taichi's life, and the *abundance* of mother figures, Tanaka's family likely had no father figure itself, or at least, one that exercised little presence on his life. Hence the abundance of mothers in Cross Channel.

Nanaka is a more idealized mother figure, who more or less forces her way in the protagonist's life; the more present figure is Youko, who is often absent, readies him food, annoys him, won't leave him alone, says he will accept everything he does, but often betrays him. Even leaving the rape as entirely metaphorical, I suspect more than one reader will recognize this behavior.

But if we have to go around mothers, there's more: Mutsumi, the one who is never seen but to which Taichi gives so much respect, and Yusa's mother. Although the latter obviously not a mother figure to Taichi, there's how she overfeeds him. It's still a form of sMothering, to say nothing of what she does to Yusa herself, as seen.

Staying on Yusa's mother, there's how every character has some sort of eating disorder, from being overfed to starving themselves to simply eating poorly; diagnosing an eating disorder out of this is of course a random guess, but some of the descriptions here are subtle and precise enough that I must suspect Tanaka has more than secondhand familiarity with them.

Now, even if these four figures are separate, it's not necessarily so in reality, making them different aspects of the same person, at times interesting and fun to be with, at times unbearable, largely absent: even Nanaka only appears in a handful of occasions.

Continuing to consider Nanaka/Youko as the main split, this division also serves to highlight how there are *bad* parts of her when fun Nanaka and the *good* parts of her when dreary Youko. Nanaka is fairly hands-on as well, overzealous, cryptic, doesn't quite seem to live in the *present* so to say, and ultimately treats Taichi like a baby, if only because these happier memories are older than Youko.

Youko, however cold and distant, who treats him as a *literal* baby in her Sendback route (see nappy), also takes care of him, watches over him, feeds him, and still represents the *present* of the mother: she's the one in the hallucination at the beginning of the pre-credits finale, not Nanaka who he still hasn't even remembered as her mother, and who doesn't return in the final bow-out of the club.

However, I have to wonder if Tanaka's mother was more than a little bipolar. And these lines, referring to Nanaka, make me believe so:

In an instant her mood corrected back to good.
It's a reaction peculiar to dangerous characters.
CCD0004

Now, there should be little surprise that Misato, *another* mother figure to Taichi if there ever was one, is considered not just the author's favorite character but among his favorite archetypes in general, and is one very important character that will lead off much of the next and deepest of interpretations.

Family Project continues on this theme as well, where the family that can easily be identified as closer to the authorial ideal of it has a *very* strong father figure; even in Humanity Has Declined that was the case. *Jintai* itself, in the school episodes, hints at a childhood secluded due to a perception of higher intellect than those around him; given Cross Channel's Taichi, and Cross Channel in general, there's no doubt that this refers to Tanaka and that this perception was very much correct.

There's not much subtlety in this identification, either: Romeo Tanaka's first pen name was Yamada Hajime, written 山田一. The 一 kanji can also be read Tsukasa, the name of the protagonist of Family Project, and 田一 can also be read Taichi. It's not impossible Cross Channel was begun before the change of pen name, given the deepest personality trait is 山辺*Yama*nobe Miki, meaning “near the mountain”.

Taichi's ultimate destiny, which is to be in a world of more or less real loneliness, capable of interacting only in *output* , also reminds of the author's minimal bidirectional contact with the world, with little material and commentary outside of the narrative products themselves.

It's interesting to note that Cross Channel marks a certain difference from Kana and Family Project, where love was found within the family, in that sense, where in Channel the only ones somewhat close to Taichi in this sense are Misato, who doesn't have anywhere near the pseudo-familiar backstory as the character in those VNs, and Youko, who is a rapist. Is Channel a sign of maturation, or is the theme simply different, *friendship* rather than *family*? This is difficult to say.

...but I remind that I'm not a trained psychologist, I just wear a spiffy fake beard and speak in a pseudo-German accent at times, so a good deal of this is speculation.

There's also one last thing to say, of which instead I'm very much certain: Romeo Tanaka is a very religious person, specifically a Christian, and he writes from that standpoint.

Cross Channel is itself a profoundly Christian story.

VII Cross Channel as a Christian Story

Any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people's minds under the cover of fiction without their knowing it.
C.S. Lewis

This Layer-VI interpretation can sound absurd, but is instead an inevitable conclusion. It's staring right at the reader when looking at the title: the word *cross* and the symbol of the cross are right there. The text reading prompt is also cross.

But, well, it's not atypical of Japanese products (and people) to make use of Christian symbols; after all, the repeatedly mentioned Nasuverse is also rife with religious and especially Christian symbols, from the Holy Grail to the participation of members of the Church of Rome, and those works have nothing of the religious[cclxii].

But those that have followed along, rather than skipped through to the obvious beacon of controversy in order to find an excuse not to read the rest [cclxiii] , should begin to guess that relying on readers assuming that there's nothing strange with things like those is *precisely what Tanaka would do* .

There's far more than those simple decorations on the title, although a reader will look in vain for straightforwards Biblical quotes; although the allegory will end up fairly obvious by the end of this, the Christianity of Cross Channel is in its depths and seeing it *demands* preexisting understanding of Christianity. There is no overt preaching here, and this is very intentional.

That this would be a religious story is pointed out very early on:

Girl: "Say, Taicchan, you ever been to the forest heart of the mountain?"
[...]
Girl: "Nah, it's just that in that area, there's a god there y'know."
[…]
Girl: "He's got this amazing graciousness, y'know."

CCA0003

Three scenes into the story and a mysterious girl is pointing to the mountain and saying *there's a god there* . But it's Taichi's reaction that tells the other half of the story:

Our two gazes locked for a brief moment.
Then suddenly and simultaneously,
Taichi: "Wahahahahahah!"
Girl: "Ahahahahahah!"
Taichi: "Wahahahahahahahahahah!"
Girl: "Ahahahahahahahahahah!"
[...]
Girl: "Naaah, wanting to ridicule it is totally natural. If some guy saidd'at to me with a really straight face I'd laugh too."
Taichi: "Therefore you just said that to me with a straight face to make me laugh, have you."
Girl: "Right, but... this is still sort of a serious thing, this is."

CCA0003

Short version: *making a straightforwardly religious story that openly talks about God is not going to work here*. Taichi here also represents the audience's skepticism, and in more ways than even “just” being the avatar for the reader. Since Nanaka is more or less the embodiment of a memory, that means she tried to talk to baby Taichi about religion, and (somehow) figured out he wasn't really listening when she spoke directly.

Not that in the West this would be better, but after all this is a story targeted at a Japanese audience, who is unlikely to understand and far more likely to trivialize or outright reject something that treats Christianity with a level of seriousness that is simply not found in most stories, not even those that treat it as anything but a stereotypical Evil Empire or as the servants of an entity that has more to do with the ancient concept of a God King than that of the Christian God.

That's why there's plenty of non-Christian terminology: Taichi uses the Buddhist word for penis (mara), the “have mercy” thing that's often quoted

is specifically a Buddhist term, not to mention the 108/1000 ratio that runs the entire concept of Cross World is so typically Japanese. And most importantly of all, the Shintoist hokora, to which Nanaka points to. But window dressing is just that, as we'll see the depth is inevitably Christian.

Nanaka pointing to the hokora returns all the way back to when examining the various characters' approaches to the world, which led to the conclusion that all, more or less clearly, were speaking of the disappearance of people *in their lives* and not of the disappearance of humanity *as a whole*. Nanaka would be an exception, but her being dead and having lived for a significant period of time alone with Taichi shows this is not the case: her time in solitude with Taichi means people abandoned *her*, as well.

When she points to the hokora, and tells Taichi that it's there he needs to go to 'fix' things with mankind, she doesn't mean in the Cross World; she means in general. And so we come to a large scale troll with regards to her:

What she left me was a string of characters comprised of the world's most extreme cliche'-class words, and a craving to move throughout the course of my entire life towards being an ordinary person.
CCX0001

But that's not *quite* true. It's those scenes when she's suddenly distant and crying for no obvious reason (remember the Misato infirmary scene?) that tell the full story: although this is *technically* covered on the above, it's simply misleading to say she didn't leave Taichi with one more thing, one more message, for everything in the way that scene is played says that those were her last words to him as the two were more or less forcibly separated. What she left him was a fundamentally religious message.

He's not the only one to have had it:

When he was in his thirties, he had the kind of nastiness in his face that is often used to scare crybabies to sleep ("kids who sleep grow up well, kids who cry die"), but sometime after the death of his parents, his face changed into one of abundance, its harshness lost.

Something outside the inheritance has changed someone who's more of a member of a biker gang than a railway fanatic into a nice guy, perhaps.

CCA0004

The Tasaki store owner (age 4**7**, therefore born 1951 1+9+5+1=16 1+6=**7**) has a puzzlingly thorough backstory for being a character that's theoretically not even minor; the reason is that he works as a Greek chorus for Taichi, Sakuraba and Yutaka, three people who have reformed their ways eventually, and with all the rest of the hints, further suggest that the change was due to him finding religion.

And so, Miki stealing from him as he steals the fictional world from Taichi takes a whole different meaning.

Now, the question of *why* the hokora is exempt from the loop, and *why* he can record his memories there, is never answered – outside of here. There's something at the hokora, despite how it's never technically seen: the hokora appears empty. But where there's nothing visible, the presence is there in the effects.

So what god is in the hokora? The direct hints are few, as most are indirect, but there is a pretty big one that can be seen right away: he's the only god of this place. No other religious building is ever seen in the story, even though that wouldn't technically exclude the presence of such.

Yet, considering the town as the entirety of the world[cclxiv], the god of the hokora is necessarily described as *the* god of everything there in the description of the setting itself.

Although not written with those kanji (as if that were a problem around here!), Kamisaka can be read “the hill of god”. Now, Nanaka can ride that bike like nobody's business on those hills, so she would be first candidate for being said god. But she herself denies it as she points to the true master at the hokora; after all, Taichi (and perhaps Sakuraba) can do all that and more.

That's because there's a terminology issue far more complex than reading a word beyond its kanji; the hill being referred to is not the hilly road, but the *mountain:*

According to the map, the majestic mountain ridges that cleave this territory in two are labeled hills.
However you look at it, that is no sweet little affair.
Taking the word of the map literally and mistaking them for a hill, someone who's planning a wife-and-my-son hiking trip or something will then be met with a guaranteed family-wide stranding.
CCA0002

It's the *politicians* who stupidly define the steep mountains around inner Kamisaka as nothing but hills. I can't but read this as social criticism considering those lines together: as God lives on those "hills", the bureaucrats would be painting religion like a stupid, silly, superstitious affair: a hill.

Treat it like that when heading deep into it, and that's a mountain from which there's no easy return, if any at all[cclxv].

And so, it's interwoven in the setting and the world how the god of the hokora is the true god of this place. So, the god would be one, not directly visible, who rules on what is functionally the entire world, and who lives in a place outside of time as the hokora is (and Taichi describes the time at the hokora as being the "right" one, unlike the one in the town).

This already puts this god at odds with the concept of kami of the Japanese Shintoism, or at least of its modern incarnations, but it's worth examining the issue of how this hokora fits a Christian view as it's very simple to solve: Christianity is far from incompatible with Shintoism, as the God of Abraham technically fits into the kami system.

The fundamental tenet in Christianity is the worship of that God over all others, not the belief in His existence and no other god's. This is something most people who don't understand Christianity seem to forget. Therefore, even if there are other supernatural creatures here - Nanaka and Youko

could fit - they would hold little if any power over Kamisaka; that is indeed the case.

Speaking of the supernatural, remember all those scientific trolls that made no sense whatsoever even at Wikipedia level knowledge, all constructed so their intentionality is obvious? Now look at Taichi on the Bible:

I wouldn't say it should be like Adam and Eve, but it'd have been good if at least humans just a little bit more perfect had survived.
Those two, originally, had been provided with completeness, with the integrity to live eternally, but because they ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil and were therefore punished, they were made into something incomplete.
And yet, they are recorded to have lived a thousand years.
If one continues with the reading of the Scriptures, it is possible to see how the lifespan of each successive generation decreases.
And then, this generation[cclxvi].
We were losing even the soundness of mind.
What could God possibly be thinking of doing by spreading around these humans so chock full of wounds?
Like me... so engorged in wicked feelings as I am.
CCC3009

Someone like Taichi, who is completely and laughably clueless about anything even remotely science related, is somehow well acquainted with the declining lifespans of people in the Bible, one that is not trite common knowledge, and that would've required him to slog through Kings at the very least.

More importantly, he is right on this!

Right, but not telling the whole thing, specifically he's dodging an important issue: Adam and Even became incomplete not by being separated from each other, which they were at their very creation, but *by being separated from God*.

This is naturally very important for a story with at least one character who believes the construction of Alter Egos will allow humans to surpass God:

Youko: "People will, someday, finally reach the horizon of physics, and set their aims on God, I think."
Youko: "The means for that objective are, I would say, only one."
Youko: "As long as all sorts and all kinds of laws exist in there and remain eternally unchanging, the order of common-sense acts permitted from the beginning is not the outset, in other words, what humans do is not what brings about physics."
Youko: "...it's only what is allowed."
Youko: "That is the upper limit."
Youko: "Thus, the choice to become God does not exist on the vector of omnipotence and omniscience."
Youko: "Phenomenization and nothing else, that is the conclusion."
CCD0009

That's what *phenomenization* meant all along: the belief that Adam and Eve, together, could somehow become complete and regain Eden. But Edens fall, inevitably, it's something inscribed all the way into the background of the world. No Eden lasts, like the first Eden that fell: the one in the Bible.

Many Edens fall in the story, from the time with his mother to the time he was playing with the children to the time of the living doll, but none of those are greater falls than the Shinkawa massacre that signaled his final departure from the mansion.

The one that precipitated this was Youko, the closest the story gets to an actual villain: she would then be the Biblical Eve. But the story is not that merciful on her:

Stretching and twining like a snake, squeezing with strength.
[...]
Perhaps the tip of the tongue is forked, perhaps it's coiling around like a vine, I don't know.
[...]
Youko-chan was smiling while protruding her tongue.

So long...
She had shown she had a skill with it so incomparable with the ordinary,
and now it dangles long from out her mouth, longer than a finger.
CCC0000

Like a snake. Forked tongue, longer than a finger.

I receive a slimy snakelike embrace.
CCD2002

Her embrace is *like a snake's*.

Lips are pushed close, her motion a snakelike crawl.
CCD5001

Youko is repeatedly compared to a snake: not just Eve, but *the devil itself* who successfully tempted her, who then successfully tempted Adam. Little wonder one of the possible interpretations of her is as a *something* that lives in the abyss that Taichi stared at for too long and stared back. Or maybe it was just his sexual desire all along:

Desire, like a snake, raises its head.
CCC3009

After all, what's more snakelike than the penis? But the two aren't contradictory in the slightest in a religious view of things. Youko, as seen in the Psychological interpretation, is the *humanity*; her being some kind of demonic presence, some agglomerate of base physical impulses of which sexuality is their king simply implies the fallen nature of mankind, an external presence that's not of the soul but is of the human.

This taint is not something unique to Christianity, but the *impossibility* of ridding oneself of these desires is not very Buddhist to say the least, and yet this is a significant part of Cross Channel: even ejecting this embodiment, this devil, or whatever metaphor may be still doesn't "fix" Taichi.

This all continues to suggest that the true end of the Eden of the Hasekura Mansion wasn't the arrival of the Shinkawas nor their massacre, but Youko's rape of Taichi. Very interesting then that this character uses a slingshot, the same weapon David used to kill Goliath, yet cannot but lightly wound a character repeatedly compared to glass who's defending herself with an apparently inadequate ***cross***bow.

Even odder the way Youko describes God, implying a single creator that exists outside of time and space, not quite conceptually compatible with the kami. But it should come to no surprise that a devil would do so: even they believe. And Youko certainly trembles, given the way he puts Taichi into a torture that very much reminds of the Passion of Christ and the crucifixion, and is defeated with basically a single word from him.

VII.I Apologizing

To show that Cross Channel is a Christian story it's not enough to point out more or less random references to something compatible with Christianity, of course, but it's necessary to dive deep into the thematic structure of the story.

The easiest way to see the religious nature of this is with the most religiously explicit character of them all: the Fallen Angel, Misato. Well, explicit for the standards here at least:

Misato: "Radio waves flying past each other, the flaring flame of friendship, events of all kinds, and then, reconciliation... becoming ordinary is our aim, will you not try to do your best together with us?"
Taichi: "....."
Misato: "The Gunjou Institute Broadcast Club is currently recruiting boys lacking confidence and abundant in emotion!"
Taichi: "...so like a religious solicitation."
Misato: "And is religion not nice?"
CCD1001

There's plenty of this kind of random little stuff with most characters, but none is as explicit as with Misato. Look at how much there is:

Taichi: "Scapegoat."
Inside of my head a sheep, just one, diving into a thicket.
CCA0016

A scapegoat, as a term, comes from the Bible and the Old Testament in particular; but note the apparent error here: she says *goat*, he says *sheep*. That's because sheep is the *new testament* thing, and the concept of lost sheep literally applies to Taichi given how he's strayed from the path and into an 'alternate world' of disappeared humanity.

Sheep which are normally guarded by a shepherd, which is the nickname for Jesus (shepherd of souls); so Youko using stone throwing, identified as a thing *shepherd* do is also a New Testament reference, and not just an Old Testament one.

Sheep and goats aren't even done here; in the finale, he begins counting scapegoats and thinks they're more appropriate than sheep as he begins to have yet another breakdown that pushes him off the path: this is why[cclxvii]. The straying continues when he has all that mathematically overcomplicated chanting of "sleep! sleep! sleep!" later on, as seen.

That's just a single random interjection; soon after that scapegoat line, Taichi goes 'tilt' and begins thinking himself a *creator of all life*. Taichi crashes, and thinks himself a god. That will be ironic in more than a few ways, the first of which is when he is writing the script for Misato and wears a kimono. He describes it like this to Tomoki (as well as Yusa in the flashback right afterwards):

Taichi: "Also the habits of the Japanese Soseki."
CCA0019

This is a really bad pun between celebrated Japanese writer Natsume Soseki and 僧籍 so[u]seki, priests. He's wearing the habits of a writer *and* of a priest in order to get inspired to write the script for the antenna broadcast.

Now, consider that the broadcast is nothing but a sermon to the audience, and that he then runs to the only religious building in the story at roughly

11AM on Sunday. Yes, the end of the story has Taichi rejecting the worldly pleasures, living a hermit's life, holding sermons and still going to church. He's all but a priest himself.

Combine with the ending as read through the meta-VN Interpretation: the message sent to the world would then be religious.

And finally, compare with Tanaka himself: he's no priest (*that anyone knows of*), but he makes his sermon to the world in a single-direction media and, given everything, it would be bizarre if he weren't found at a religious building at around 11AM on your typical Sunday [cclxviii] . This is one of the reasons why I am strongly skeptical of Taichi being the "bad guy" in Another Story, precisely *because* he's wearing the kimono.

The story is chock full of this kind of details, for example, in the Beach scene:

Ah, a resurrection.
[...]
Taichi: "So much like the Forbidden Fruit. Adam I might not be, yet, they still seduce me so!"
CCA0027

Things surrounding Misato go all the way to Tomoki:

Tomoki: "IT'S A LIE! Tell me it's a lie, Jehovaaah!"
Kiri: "...uhm, Shima-senpai... it does look like a lie, so there is no need to pray to the God Almighty while facing towards the sea like that..."
CCA0027

Sort of odd for someone from Japan screaming the Lord's name - literally, *the* Lord's name - when frustrated. Knowing the name isn't odd, as there's plenty of Christianity in the Japanese education, so Kiri immediately acknowledging it isn't surprising.

His *shouting* the name when frustrated, and her referring to Him as the "God Almighty" far less so.

Now, taking the Lord's name in vain is not exactly a Christian thing to do, but it *is* a human thing to do; this continues the concept already established that this will be foremost a *human* story, and not an explicitly Christian one. So the focus is not on them taking the name in vain, but that they take *that name specifically* in vain.

Taichi does it more than a few times, too:

Taichi: "Goddamn it!"
CCB0008B

Taichi: "That brilliance surpasses that of a diamond... but alas, a diamond is but carbon, and when thrown in a fire it burns all the way. Goddamn it. The stupidity of storing all the fortune accumulated in a lifetime in something diamond-like I have learned well."
CCB2005

Taichi: "...it's the clitoris! Jesus. LkLkLkLkLk!"
CCC3027

...and speaking of Kiri, that was her sex scene. It's not even the only one in there:

Taichi: "Let's become Adam and Eve!"
[...]
Kiri: "...then... me with... Senpai...?"
CCC3027

Consider that Taichi tried to construct Alter Egos with her not a few hours earlier, and how the Adam and Eve and the Alter Egos ties back to Youko. And that, I remind, was just a random interjection in a *sex scene!*

References are nice, but that's still not the point: Misato's problem is that she betrayed her father. She grew Automatic and sold him to the law of the humans. Despite this being technically correct by human standards, she

regrets it; as in reality, legality does not equal morality in the world of Cross Channel.

She first tries what she has done all along: punish herself. In this case, she recruits Taichi, who she *may* know isn't quite the most stable boy to be around. But it fails spectacularly:

Misato: "...and with this... will I be forgiven?"
[...]
Accepting an unsuitable punishment is not the resolution of a sin.
No, from the very start this---
Misato: "Will I... with this... be forgiven...?"
Taichi: "No sin can ever be tolerated."
[...]
Misato: "Then... whatever I do, I never will..."
[...]
If I were just a little less objectionable a human, I would have been capable of cheering her up.
Formulating an argument devoid of honesty that would contrast her self-contemplation.
But I can't do it.
Whatever you do, indeed.
That is the certain truth, and because I so believed,
the silence conveyed the intention.
[...]
Even though, in a Happy Ending,
there would certainly be a beautiful Trauma Counseling here.
CCD1001B

Sins are intolerable. The past can't be changed. Memories do not go away even if they look like they do, it's only a question of needing something to trigger their recall; the past never vanishes; the world does not reset even if it should, which itself is a hint that the time loop *must* be false; nothing is ever forgotten, buried or gone unnoticed. Nothing is ever gone.

He says it as if it was a bad thing, because he himself doesn't understand it quite yet as he's still learning it throughout Sendback, but this cannot be

fixed with cartoonish hugging, crying and it just being "all right" all of a sudden.

And the actions of the sort that create sin will not stop: human nature will not go away even after it's 'dealt with', as Youko is.

For Taichi, it's back to the drawing board, and that's where he hits on the solution: she wants to apologize, despite having done right by the laws of the world. For this to make thematic sense, the inevitable conclusion is that there must exist a higher law than that of men: said law would then be the law of at least *a* god.

This law does not permit sin, nor taking back the past; but it's not all over at the first sin, either. This law is not merciless, as it does permit something; and Taichi knows what it is, beneath it all, as does Tomoki:

Taichi: "If you really hate Senpai then there's no ways, but..."
Taichi: "Maybe that father could... forgive Mimi-senpai you know."
CCD1001B

Capitalize that 'father': obvious enough now? And here is the larger religious subtext of Cross Channel: *forgiveness*. This, as evidenced above, is not some trite cartoonish trauma counseling thing but a very specific concept; it's an ask and receive thing that requires a level of *sincere repentance* first of all.

Tomoki only does it after he reflects on how his father would indeed forgive Misato, and he *knows* underneath it all that he (and He) will: after all, Taichi can hypothesize that he would all day, but it's Tomoki that knows him.

As the father forgives, so should he: this is the message found in much of the New Testament, especially in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant , and well summed up by C.S. Lewis:

To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.
C.S. Lewis

When Tomoki does forgive her, or at least first shows every hint that he will, something happens that shouldn't: *Tomoki runs* so that he can make the deadline. There's no explanation for this, and while it could be hypothesized his wound is not so harsh that he can't run at all or that he just powers through it, Taichi says he beat him the day before largely because of this literal Achilles' Heel of his, and when he arrives at the hokora he is tired but unhurt.

Tomoki's heel wound highlighted a fairly big hypocrisy of his own: he forgave Misato for hurting him badly, but didn't for doing something bad to *someone else* . What happens at the end of the most strongly religious route in the story is therefore the closest to an undeniable outright miracle there is in the whole of Cross Channel.

And Taichi was right: not only does their father call her immediately after leaving the Cross World (or whatever the allegorical equivalent), with the implication they made up, but *her mother forgives her too* as she moves in together with Tomoki, who is living with said mother.

Theirs is the most blatant, but the forgiveness – and lack thereof – is part of Taichi's history with Yutaka. He knows that forgiveness was the only way:

Taichi: "That friend was, long ago, one of the humans who hurt me."
Taichi: "He then just appeared right in front of me, having lost his memory."
Taichi: "And he acted as if his sin had disappeared together with those memories."
[…]
Taichi: "But once, on the spur of some moment, I recognized him."
Taichi: "Truth is, the pain I got from him should not have been that much of a big deal at all to me, as I am now."
[…]
Taichi: "But I... I attempted to see that person as a friend at all costs, but eventually I could not do so anymore."
[...]
Taichi: "I ended up seeing him like... a thing."

Taichi: "I think it was different from an emotional argument like 'I cannot forgive him', but,"
Taichi: "inside of me, the worth of that person changed completely, it certainly did."
Taichi: "No... changed is not the correct word... he became worthless to me."
Taichi: "My interest in him disappeared."
Taichi: "When the guy recovered his memories, he came and asked me to forgive him."
Taichi: "Could it even be... that if he had not come to ask forgiveness, that the result would've been different? I do not know."
Taichi: "Whatever happens, the past is impossible to alter."
Taichi: "Sin, I believe, is something you either just accept or respond to with hostility, nothing else."
CCC3030

Rationally he understands: he has recovered, it may or may not have been a big deal, he has his share of fault as well with the (possible) murders and everything, the past can't be changed and all that. But he could not. This automatism, this part that's deeper than rationality, stops him.

One thing seen with regards to Yutaka is Taichi's hypocrisy with how he treats Sakuraba, with whom he has a very similar history: he forgave Sakuraba but not Yutaka.

Was it just the extent of the sin? That's still hypocritical and insufficient, as Yutaka would still have to forgive Taichi for the brutally sadistic massacre of his entire family.

Is it because forgiving would've required him to play nice with Yutaka? Not necessarily, once more Sakuraba shows that forgiving is no cartoonish trifle: Taichi does not exactly treat Sakuraba as nicely as he treats say Miki, but he doesn't answer his fairly quirky attempts at communication as he answered Yutaka begging for forgiveness, either.

See also Tomoki's relationship with his sister after she takes running from him: strained, but not openly antagonistic (*yet*). He could have rejected

joining her club, but in the end he didn't. It's only after the thing with their father that he really begins to refuse to even be in the room with her and starts his own club with retaliation as goal.

There's one more thing with Yutaka: Taichi suspected Yutaka hadn't changed, then, and that he was going to do bad things to Kiri:

Taichi: "W-, woah, there must be the will of someone preposterous mediating in that location."
CCA0018B

The simplistic reading of this line is that God himself must be putting Yutaka and cute sort-of-blood-related sister-like Kiri in his home, where their parents almost never are, a nukige setup if there ever was one; but what he says without realizing is that despite being subjected to what should be an irresistible temptation, Yutaka never ever even *hints* at being so much as tempted by Kiri.

There's how she treats him pretty poorly, but she's tsundere, so it's an act, see her tears in that rooftop kiss scene; on the other hand, she's sharp despite it all, so maybe she sees through him regardless of how he's forgotten, what with how easily she accepts Taichi's story.

But if there's no reset, then there's also how quickly she *forgets* Taichi's story following his making her into a sex slave, at least until he 'resets' and forgets all that he did. Things get even worse when she has more reasons to think him a murderer in the Miki route.

Even when she accepts what Yutaka was, her continuing thinking about him, her wanting to make up for him as well, shows that whether Kiri knew or not *she forgave him* . After all, Yutaka did far worse than Taichi's skirt flips.

Forgiven, but not forgotten: if she let him go, she would she would be replacing a co-dependence with Yutaka with one with Taichi, as she replaced Yutaka with Miki already; once again the sex slave thing and the

punishment not only doesn't work, but it pretty much derails the forgiveness.

So while *forgiving* is an important part of the story, it's no magic fix-it-all nor is it something simple and easy to give (or obtain) in the first place. Forgiveness itself won't make interaction easy, straightforwards, or instantly nice: interaction may always be difficult, and in some cases, as with Touko and Youko, the best that can be done is simply staying well away from each other.

But without forgiveness, things cannot even get that far.

Taichi would always feel the weight of his debt to Touko, even if in the end she was as guilty of events as he was; Youko would get pushed away, but not as firmly as needed, because Taichi is too afraid to tell her what she did, and she doesn't want to hear it: endless stalemate, nothing gets to a head, no confrontation of the problem. It's the Cold War between Tomoki and Misato.

In this sense, the Catholic sacrament of *confession* is played with Taichi speaking his sins at the antenna, but the point isn't even that, it's *confrontation* . In the confession speech at the end of the Kiri route, Taichi is all but wishing that Yutaka had left well enough alone rather than apologizing, but as Taichi was beginning to see him as a *thing* , that would never have worked.

That something would've been wrong was visible right from the start: he says there are eight of them alive, when he knows that Touko is dead. It's a lie, just like the first week that opens the story. ...but of course, no one is dead, so there would be more than eight alive, but Youko *is* dead or otherwise nonexistent, and... this lie is of far more complex nature, as is the lie that is the first week; but that doesn't make it a *lie* any less.

Just one that shows a greater truth: even public recanting won't fix things. It's no mystery Kiri goes even crazier in the Miki route, despite him having seemingly fixed everything with her if there's no reset.

But reality does not accept this kind of lies. When things don't come to a head, they don't go away; they swirl and fester and compress and metastasize until...

What ethics has humanity tried to put together throughout its long history?
A bright wholesomeness with no darkness, maybe.
...is that not a mistake?
Doesn't the darkness just condense the more it is squeezed into a prison?
Things shall be born from this everlasting darkness.
And in the end, can those be said to be people?
CCC3022

... *boom* .

And we now reconnect to the concept of laws. As with Gunjou being an implicit but unquestionable condemnation of the State and what it does, this is a reminder that the law of men is simply powerless not even in front of God, but in front of something much simpler: the physical reality of human beings.

All his discussion about Wants and Desires, of how a world without others would be a world without laws but also a world without goals that he did in Week 1 when going to get the key from the kouban would appear hypocritical considering he, in the end, lives in a world "alone" *but* with a very specific goal in mind, which could contradict his entire discourse [cclxix] .

This goal first appears when he ejects Youko and renounces simply lying on the bed and truly not interacting in any way shape or form with the world, simply staring in an empty room, taking care of his own bodily needs in a way that betrays disgust with the entire need to do so.

That is a rejection not of the world and its rules, but of *being human* . It's still Taichi playing at being an animal dressed up as human. Therefore, while a world of nobody means a world with no *laws* , it does not mean a world without rules: there are some that are greater than those humans can conceive or operate with, laws not so much of nature, but of God.

Taichi's entire talk in that early first week scene was constructed under an erroneous premise.

This forgiveness naturally has a perfect Biblical overlapping with that given by Jesus with his sacrifice: previous sins *cannot* be erased – in fact, humans carry an Original Sin all the way inside of them that can *never* be erased – but God offers an out.

To do so requires serious repentance first, and that's as easy for humans to offer as the whole concept of religion (let alone Christianity) is a hill one can conquer in a day trip; to say nothing of giving forgiveness, which is Taichi's problem beyond a repentance that's still immature, taking the form of a desire to *take things back* rather than working with things that change and that will never be the same in the future.

This precise balance of forgiveness and repentance is typically Christian, so while forgiveness may not be exclusively of this religion, the rest is. Cross Channel is and remains not generally religious but Christian in the specific.

And still, all the forgiveness, all the ultimately following God's rules even without understanding whose they would be, in the end he *still* has a big crisis. Until he goes to the hokora again and realizes he has no escape from this world, as there's no suicide out of here [cclxx] . And yet, he thought the portal would disappear – and appeared to be at peace about this – at the end of the previous route.

So forgiveness is important, and so is the apologizing; they are fundamental parts of the story, but by their very nature those alone won't end human difficulties and suffering. As said, actions that generate sin won't end as long as one is alive in this world, because the rules one is violating (and therefore sinning against) are *not* generated by others but are higher than those.

So when Taichi claims that sending everyone away will end the problem, he's still mistaken: there's a human nature that is insurmountable, so his sins will continue even in solitude, even if those of the past have been burned away. That is the Original Sin.

Nothing will ever end until at least death, as the Bible isn't shy of saying. But Taichi is not dead; he is “condemned” to risk it all every week, as anything can happen to cause him to “die” in this spiritual sense, all the way from missing the hokora even once – until his time comes. That's what he at last realizes in the end, and which he sort of regrets doing *after* he had isolated himself from the world of men, likely permanently.

It'll be this *constantly being at the hokora* that hints at the one missing key, which we will see when examining the influences of Lewis and the concept of *relearning the same lessons* that he best illustrates.

VII.II Matthew 18

This chapter of the Bible provides some of the most important religious aspects of Cross Channel. We've already seen two parts: the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, but we also saw the Parable of the Wandering Sheep with the thing about scapegoats.

Almost every part of that chapter sheds light on some aspect of the story:

> At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
> Matt 18:1-4

The return to infancy was already hinted with Taichi's reliving his birth and his likely problematic sleeping patterns, but it's also made explicit:

> Violent emotions that are not covered by the basic descriptors of happiness, fear, sorrow, pleasure.
> The emotions... of a baby.
> **CCX0001**

And he's not the only one. Consider Taichi's description of sleeping Misato:

Her figure natural in posture, unadorned.
There are no lies there,
filth neither.
All return to a time of purity when they sleep.
CCA0010

And when she wakes up:

Her linguistic senses blunted, Senpai had a cherubic voice like a little girl's.
CCA0010

Tomoki's no slouch:

Tomoki: "Ta-, Taichin! That is a bad thing to do, it's way too dirty! (infantilized)"
CCA0030

All are like this: Yutaka has something similar to what Taichi might have; Touko eats like a cute little animal and has a sucking reflex when sleeping; Kiri is "Miss Innocence"; Sakuraba is an apparent adult child; Miki plays with Taichi (and remember the Miki House); Yusa is all but literally a little child; Youko bullies Kiri and Touko like a child...

None of them are automatically salvageable or saved, of course, but *all* of them show signs that they can be as children and these verses show why that would be important in the themes of the story.

Although the part about the sin in the Church is only laterally relevant, as the reciprocal influence plays an important part but there is little of the explicit church in this story, there is one more part that does:

If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Matt 5:29-30

Forgiveness is no cartoonish simple thing, and no miraculous cure-all alone, but a difficult *path* to be trodden, day after day.

While forgiveness ought be freely given, and the consequences for not doing so may end up harsher than the difficulty of doing so in the first place, itself isn't necessarily free. Or rather, the *repentance* that allows forgiveness isn't; often precisely because of the difficulty intrinsic in it.

And so, many pay a price. Yutaka loses the function of one of his legs, as well as his memory; Sakuraba loses hearing in one of his ears, as well as sexual potency; and there's that hypocrisy of Tomoki's with regards to his leg wounds. In both cases, however, the repentance was real.

Taichi loses his hair color and the belief he is human, but when confronted with Yutaka's request for forgiveness, he instead demands his death. This was a form punishment: it didn't work for anyone involved, because this punishment also wasn't accompanied with forgiveness – the Unmerciful Servant once again.

He has to lose the ability to 'be' in the real world and give up what's left of the Club before this begins to truly change. As seen in the lie he opens the final confession in the Kiri route, only after everything but everything is done is Taichi's repentance truly credible.

VII.III Driving vs. Biking

This is one of the subtlest metaphors, which is saying something in the context of Cross Channel. We've already seen parts of this, but now we can see it more in-depth. This is how the contrast is first introduced:

Shinkawa: "Told you can't really move it. I can sort of of work it on manual, let's say."
Shinkawa: "It's annoying to use."
CCA0011B

This is a hard pun to understand, as it's a mixed metaphor – he's talking about keeping his foot on manual drive; he's making a *driving* reference. Yutaka keeps his foot, psychologically broken as a reminder of what Taichi did to him and punishment for his own sins, in "manual drive".

This is insisted upon, so it's no random thing:

Taichi: "Yup, this Kounosu Taichi here has being in spirits even in case of driving license suspension as his only redeeming feature."
Shinkawa: "Ain't those the words that Tanizaki Yutaka here with his name written with the kanji for 'abundance' should be saying?"
CCA0018B

The metaphor continues when he trolls Tomoki:

Tomoki: "I wanna try driving! But I'm not really familiar with cars 's all."
Taichi: "Manual transmission cars are simple yannow."
Tomoki: "Manual?"
Taichi: "Yeah. The ones with three pedals."
Taichi: "I think you'll find some quick if you look in the faculty members parking lot. Just don't get the ones with two pedals, 'K. Those are fairly dangerous for an amateur to operate, so you know."
CCC3018

Or so he claims, but remember Yutaka. Tomoki, in this, is much closer to him than Sakuraba is: it's implied he manages to get driving a manual transmission cars on his own (Sakuraba's "help" is going to be useless and not just for the obvious, we'll see in a moment) and without training. And since it's Tomoki:

Tomoki had a lack of driving talent that reached the divine.
CCC3020

...the religious subtext is made as explicit as it will get here.

Taichi and cars, on the other hand, hoo boy:

I am a man, therefore the 'mission, naturally,
is automatic.
It's a vehicle for women and children, they say.
Taichi: "Pah, I'm gonna show you now!"
CCC3020

He picks an automatic gear car. Did he even do that intentionally?

I magnificently accelerate from a half-clutch position.
CCC3020

All things considered, Taichi managing to figure out how to even get the car in Drive gear is much more amazing than his attempt to use a *manual gear driving technique* in an *automatic transmission car*. Oh, and file away for later on what he blames this on:

My biorhythms seem to be off today.
CCC3020

This stuff isn't as popular in Japan as it in the West, at least going by the status of the Japanese Wikipedia page on the subject as of writing (stub). Odd he'd use something so Western, isn't it? And there's more there with how he claims Japanese cars could never be used for the American police force.

Taichi will try again and again driving vehicles, inevitably with the same results. That Taichi can't drive but possible split personality/demon Youko can, and very smoothly, is another hint that something is wrong here.

This is where we reconnect to what already seen about Touko and her route as to whether Taichi *ever* drives a vehicle - and therefore, whether Tomoki does either. In that Touko scene we saw the hint was how he defined Touko's baggage in "bike trailer loads", oddly enough, and how he manages to make all the round trips without exactly dying of effort.

And so, biking. This one started all the way in the very opening of the story, with the thing about Sakuraba: he not only finds a way to leave town with

that bike, he pedals away for *days* without telling his parents, pretty much until the bike breaks and he has to come back on foot, before being arrested.

Nanaka is the other big biker, and she dominates those hills like nobody's business. Hills that, again as in the Touko route analysis, Taichi himself claimed to be really tough to go around. Although “Kamisaka” is about something else, her biking skill at the very least makes thinking that she'd be the one pulling the strings an understandable mistake.

Notice that while the metaphor is fairly thorough, only a few characters are heard driving or biking: Misato, Touko, Kiri and Miki are never heard do anything remotely related; same outside of the Cross World, outside of Yutaka.

So: Tomoki, Youko and Yutaka are drivers, while Taichi, Nanaka and Sakuraba are bikers. There's the parallels:

- Tomoki vs. Taichi
- Yutaka vs. Sakuraba
- Youko vs. Nanaka

Tomoki and Taichi having this going for them is interesting when considering Taichi should be the most broken boy in Gunjou, and Tomoki among the healthiest. This is far from, but that's because the two of them share the same problem with forgiving: the two are both 100% human, whatever the test says.

The other parallels we've seen already, but there's one thing not to forget, in that the parallel goes a bit deeper: *automatic* vs. *manual* gear. Yutaka keeps it in *manual*, Tomoki manages *manual*, while Youko is harder to tell - and if she doesn't exist, not that important.

This points right back at the concept of automatic behavior: Yutaka would then have gotten 'off' of it, Tomoki can unlearn it but quick, while Taichi affects that automatic is child's play, but can't manage so much as that. A human pretending to be an animal pretending to be a human, as said.

On the other hand, Sakuraba can manage to leave the town on his bike, Nanaka dominates the hills and points at the hokora, and Taichi can send people back to the real world through the 'correct' path that is near there.

After all, while there is a narrow path, cars could only leave via train. And that, as said, looks so impractical to make it odd that there are cars in Kamisaka at all.

This all is of course further evidence that driving may never happen: Youko doesn't exist and Yutaka may have a driving metaphor associated to him but never *actually* drives; circumstantial evidence that makes Tomoki's driving very suspect.

VII.IV Peanuts, Persimmon Seeds and Curry

Sakuraba looks like a fool but he isn't, and this was already seen through the sheer number of reading keys this guy has to give. The one about Yutaka was well and seen, but it's only now that the reason for all of that is understandable – even if the reason itself was hinted in the story:

On the day Sakuraba's eardrum broke, that very day,
this guy calmed down in a way that would sound almost like a lie.
And, at the same time, his sexual desires also vanished.
What caused that? Unknown.
Maybe the hard blow of a broken heart, maybe the achievement of enlightenment.
CCC4016

Enlightenment via being smacked in the head which should also remind of Miki's attack in Another Story, and how to deal with Taichi's Garbage Generator in general.

However, it's not necessarily the hit *itself* that made Sakuraba achieve this; he was also recovered in a hospital. It was also possibly where the Tasaki store owner went as he visited his parents before their deaths. Touko also went to the hospital, but her wound was *self-inflicted*, therefore no change for her.

Regardless, Sakuraba 'got' Christianity somewhere around then, but Cross Channel being what it is, he doesn't have much of a conscious knowledge of this. Non-consciously, however... well, the thing about Christianity is that there's life after death, or to put it in His words, *those who lose their life for Him will find it*.

With Sakuraba things are a little more literal: he's just immortal.

In the Beach scene, he keeps his head in the sand for almost an entire afternoon without any impact. He possibly managed that three-day bike trip without breaks. He takes inordinate amounts of physical *and* psychological punishment (the newspaper) with little to no consequence, although his *resurrection* can take time.

This is played until he's literally a zombie, as seen with the Resident Evil-like scene in the Touko route; the method of execution leaves little to speculation on this: Sakuraba can die and return pretty much at will.

Making the most Christian of all characters (above even Misato) a zombie of all things is the exact kind of silly thing Tanaka would do, to keep company to the taking of God's name in vain *still* being used to hint that this is a Christian story, and in keeping with the idea of lies revealing greater truths..

Sakuraba's not the only revenant: Yutaka is also someone who was tossed down the stairs by Taichi, and somehow still remained alive until that fateful day. And then, there's the people in the Club that Taichi keeps “killing”, but somehow they don't stay dead; they aren't immortal, but that simply makes Sakuraba's immortality the reading key: that's the reason why he leaves during the Miki route, because Taichi could “kill” him all day and he would just get up moments later without even noticing things.

The rest manage to somehow play along with his "murdering" them much better, what with Touko in her bed or in the infirmary recovering from a fainting spell, Misato and Tomoki at their homes sulking after a big fight, Youko not existing and Kiri obeying Miki and staying away from him for the time being.

Now, since Sakuraba knows deep beneath it all how things are working, and his 'script' is encoded – as is the religious core of Cross Channel, of course – then his apparently weird tirades over nothing should make sense if read with religion as the reading key. That is of course the case.

The biggest of them is the Seeds of Persimmon thing, which is even literally described by Taichi as a sermon:

Sakuraba: "There is a type of seed of persimmon, or Kaki no Tane, that is actually a peanut-based snack usually served with beer. Did you know?"
Sakuraba speaks, ignoring us. Or should I say, unable to hear us.
[...]
Sakuraba: "And people that won't accept these peanuts being referred to as Kaki no Tane are unexpectedly many."
[...]
Sakuraba: "But I, myself, do not normally accept that as anything but a deceit. Why do you think that is?"
Taichi: "Ah, because certain peanuts are called Seeds of Persimmon, that would mean there are necessarily some peanuts that are of the genus of persimmon, and therefore persimmon trees that grow from these peanuts?"
Sakuraba: "Indeed. If you don't like that, then go eat actual persimmon seeds. Complaining that in peanut-based Kaki no Tane there should not be peanuts is to undermine the dignity of the persimmon-genus peanut."
Sakuraba: "That's a deceit."
[...]
Sakuraba: "Therefore, I dare venture to only eat Kaki no Tane made of peanuts that grow from persimmon trees that have grown from persimmon-genus peanuts."

CCC3004

This one's the doozy of doozies.

The thing about Sakuraba not listening, or rather, not being able to hear, is the hint that this needs to be interpreted through what causes Sakuraba not to listen to people. In this specific case it's not the parallel with Yutaka nor

the thing about the price to pay, but far more literal: *he's listening to someone else*.

Not the only time things of the sort appear, given how Taichi can contact the other side (whatever it is) via the antenna, but here it's specific: Sakuraba is a sheep, and he knows His voice.

Next, notice that *Taichi* is the one telling the core of the joke: due to the translation, things are a little more blatant (Kaki no Tane means the snack, 'seeds of persimmon', 'persimmon tree' and 'persimmon genus' *all at once*), but not that much more as the pun is not obvious unless one knows at least about the snack. Whatever Sakuraba is talking about, Taichi also understands it somehow.

Third part: *deceit*. The Kaki no Tane talk takes place during the introduction of Miki and Kiri to the club, which is very important and is the cornerstone of many of Taichi's memories (as well as being severely edited itself). This scene also comes right after the flashback to his first official meeting with Kiri, which is actually in the same script file.

In that scene, Taichi talks to Kiri about how inevitable it is for him to act in the perverted way, and that it's just his way of interacting. And then, this very ambiguous part:

Downcast,
the girl lost herself in meditation.
Into the labyrinth of thoughts that I pushed her down into.
Thinking over and over the words I lied out,
it's just like there's something there that says, "he's hardworking, unwholesomeness notwithstanding".
There was intent to swallow that deceit, hiding it in the very bottom of the heart.
CCC3004

Kiri rejects his words, and Taichi hints this means she sees through him to the monster he is, but as we've seen things are much more complex: Taichi's deception is largely a *self*-deception, where he thinks he's far more evil than

he is at least in typical action, and if Kiri sees everything, it's *that* part of him.

So when Sakuraba, moments later, talks about *deceit* using the exact same word, it's very intentional. Sure, the flashbacks are technically of different moments, but that scene is already known to have been altered in ways impossible so it's not far fetched. Plus, it's not like Sakuraba doesn't somehow know that this is where Taichi would index the memory; Tanaka told him, if no one else.

And so, the whole thing about seeds of persimmon, peanuts and Kaki no Tane would be about Taichi, who is human/fundamentally normal/a peanut(?), but not *perfectly* normal/*wholly* human/persimmon(???), not in the way Kiri would want him to be for example.

Hmmm, sort of makes sense but it's all way complex. Nanaka has something to add that may clarify things:

Nanaka: "If you can accept that there's dignity in referring to peanuts as Seeds of Persimmon, then not accepting a weak companion that stays weak is kinda odd isn't it."
CCC0045B

Someone weak staying weak is to be accepted in the same way as peanuts are Seeds of Persimmon. But that still doesn't explain how or why a *peanut* can be a *seed*. At this point there's still little choice but go to the Bible, specifically the Parable of the Sower and Matthew 13 in general.

This serves as an introduction to the concept of *transformation* which we'll see more in detail when examining the influences of C.S. Lewis, and that runs throughout Cross Channel as forgiveness does, perhaps even deeper.

Kaki no Tane are, as said, both actual seeds of persimmon and a peanut snack; the joke is that peanuts (specifically crunchy toasted ones) are not something that can be planted and grow, and even if they did, they would not grow into *persimmons*. But when read through the Christian interpretation of things, the parable makes easy sense.

The peanuts are mankind as they are: they kind of look like God (*image and likeness*), or in this case are *called* like the real deal, but nothing can grow from there. Kaki no Tane are very literally toast. The persimmon would be God, or at least mankind as it should be: reflective of God and His harvest.

So the question is, *what can make a peanut into an actual seed of persimmon?* If read through basic concepts of Jesus, the answer is simple: all those who follow Him will be made into his sons, as if His flesh and blood all along and no longer mere lookalikes and name-sakes.

And similarly, the peanuts can be made into real persimmon. And perhaps, forgiveness is what it's all about in the first place.

There's one more thing about Kaki no Tane, which is really only obvious after trying them [cclxxi] : they're *really* spicy! And Sakuraba has a taste for the spicy stuff, or at least curry. And so we get to the other big deal with Sakuraba: what is curry, or rather, curry bread given he doesn't like curry?

The thing about curry bread is threefold. One, Sakuraba seems to like it over *everything else*. Two, *no one else* seems to like it. Three, he will eat it to indigestion: whatever it is, it is *not* the solution on its own.

Tanaka, in the Materials Book interview, says that curry bread is sort of mistakenly named, as the curry in it tastes nothing like actual curry, and this concept serves as reading key for that diary writing in the first week:

Who was it that first took the curry out of the curry bread and ate that with rice?
CCA0015C

Nobody, of course, that's the opposite if anything.

But Taichi grows to like curry during the story, although it begins very subtly. At the beginning of the Youko route, Taichi feeds spicy stuff to Youko, who is sent to her knees by it (Nanaka approves, as well). This begins to consolidate during Sendback, where it starts still subtly:

Taichi: "Yours looks tasty tho."
Miki: "Curry flavor."
Taichi: "Give it a swap."
Miki: "Of course, here."
Taichi: "...ah, delicious. Was there more of this?"
CCD4003

...and ends like this:

I pass my gaze on the surroundings.
...empty packets of curry bread were scattered about.
I can't bring myself to even taste the croquette bread, however delicious it should be.
CCX0001

He likes curry so much he can't even eat anything else. Of course, this is just before he has *another* crisis, so it not being the solution remains, whatever curry and curry bread is. And whatever it is, it's not something which power can be underestimated:

What spins those words is a feeble thin voice, as if the voice of someone else.
And then I was made to eat.
It was curry.
CCD5001

This marks an important change in the Youko Sendback route: it's when Taichi stops taking things lightly and begins his real resistance. It may be this strength what eventually saves him from her, and it strongly parallels what he did at the beginning of the Youko route.

Curry bread, and in fact curry in general, is something nourishing, that people who are headed and move towards Christianity are attracted to and consume, which gives them spiritual strength[cclxxii], but that won't get them through life on its own.

I suspect curry bread may be the individual study of spirituality, if not straight-up the reading of the Bible, and in general Christianity as the religion itself; why it doesn't work alone will be better seen when considering C.S. Lewis, but for now, remember that what saves Sakuraba in the end is being made to go through the gate: that's the correct way of leaving town, not the path that goes near the gate and which he is known to take easily with that bike of his[cclxxiii].

There's one more thing: Sakuraba loves curry bread, but *not* curry; the reason is simple and pretty much the same as with the Seeds of Persimmon and the Kaki no Tane. What's in the curry bread is different from curry, says the author himself, but it would be a deceit to call it anything but, wouldn't it?

VII.V Coincidence

Setting aside the reality of the actual events, the big reveal of the Miki route is that the great killer was *coincidence*. All this setup, and in the end what happened is that half of the dead tripped over and bonked their heads somewhere: this should be fairly disappointing.

There's more to this of course: the nature of coincidence in Cross Channel. As should be more than readily obvious as of this point in the monograph, coincidence in Cross Channel is codeword for *intentional design point* . Actual coincidence is harder to find than outright plot holes: from the ghost of a memory that is Nanaka “coincidentally” telling him about the hokora to Taichi “coincidentally” deciding to go there.

So far, however, nothing changes: the author simply decides some things happen, and they do. Pure plot convenience. Then *why* attract attention to it so openly as to have one character state it outright? That would be counterproductive at least if all this were is plot convenience.

So the question is, what exactly does this coincidence represents?

Coincidence is what makes Miki fail to use the hokora to control the world, to make it 'perfect', to make it predictable, to make it safe. It's as possible as making friends safe by draining their blood, and one more hint that

something isn't as it shouldn't be: if the reset were actually real, and all were put back the way it was, then the world should be entirely deterministic. It isn't. There's no reset, no determinism, or both (as is the case).

Taichi himself will try to do so himself the very next week, failing miserably as there's simply too much to do (no harem endings here!), although he doesn't try across multiple weeks; that would not help *precisely* because of this “random” effect that would come to screw over any such attempt.

Let's go back to the great reading key for Miki vs. Taichi, the one in the corridor with Kiri. Miki “disables the wiring that causes Taichi's penis? to self destruct” (...): it may be a bad joke, but Miki failing to understand there are two nipples is the hint.

Her reaction in the reading key scene is to fight to the end, even if the fight would cost the life of his other play partner: it would've been a tragedy compatible with what happened between Taichi and Yutaka, whether the crossbow exists or not. This is different in her reaction in the use of the hokora, which is to give up on it as being a miserable failure after Taichi more or less hints that this is so – without quite understanding it, as in their final moments before the “reset” he wishes for her to continue trying this.

Miki in that reading key gets beaten by *ergonomics* : the study of the human being. In Cross Channel, that's the nature of humanity as well as the One who commands them. Seen through a religious viewpoint, the reason why she fails is simply the same reason why Misato wants to apologize despite having done right by the laws of the world: because there is something greater than them.

What Miki is attempting to do is establishing her laws in order to create her own Utopia, and that route is the Natural Law reminding her who's boss. Indirectly this explains the nature of coincidence: *a higher power with the capabilities of establishing greater laws than that of humans*, which in this context is necessarily the already established God.

It's even said all but explicitly in Another Story:

Someone, possibly the god[cclxxiv] called coincidence, overlapped two sheets of paper and shoots 'em dead with a thumbtack.
CCZAS

But while this “coincidence”, this *fate* , is at worst an unavoidable intrinsic part of the world and at best the interference of an intelligent entity unconstrained by the limits of physics (as Youko herself has to admit), not everything is. Miki's decision to use the hokora is a *choice* , and so is her ultimate refusal to continue doing so.

The concept of coincidence leads directly to *fate* versus *free will* .

Fate may have brought Taichi to the mansion, as a child can't well decide for the life of his own mother or his destination, but could he have rejected the Hasekuras' proposal of making him into a girl? He *did* say he had no volition of opposition. Since that's one of the possible origins of Youko, would he have been right to resist, at least in the ways given to him?

Same with Youko. She proposed him the plan to kill everyone and raped him, but could he have resisted? And on and on, all throughout the story, all through all characters, the concept of not being able to decide which cards are handed them, but *always* being able to pick how to play them:

Misato: "But when I told you to stop, you did stop."
Did I now?
But I expect I wouldn't have been able to interpret language.
Coincidence?
That is what I decide it is.
But... was it?
CCA0016

Taichi has a split personality, but is what happened in that scene divine intervention or simply his ability to resist the temptation? Readers don't get a choice on that, only on the reaction afterwards.

Tanaka is not simplistic here as he isn't elsewhere. Automatism is not something that can be beaten either easily or completely; without this Coincidence, perhaps not at all. Miki could reject the temptation of the hokora, but could she have done it without Taichi deciding to be friends with her and her deciding to be friends with him and without her falling in love with him?

And then, there's the failure. Everybody failed something somewhere, whether it be Misato failing to keep herself restrained with regards to her father or Touko with not growing possessive of Taichi. Taichi fails all throughout: it may be said that him needing to reject everyone before finally figuring out the point of all things is a very big failure.

But failure is not the end. His failing to forgive Yutaka and the collapse that began there still eventually led him to the right answer. It is here that what Nanaka left him, *the desire for normalcy* , what Misato calls a “normalcy complex” (and that he admits to having, even if his tone appears very sarcastic) that helps him: he keeps trying. He fails, he picks himself up, and tries again.

His arrival at the ending seen is not permanent, it's not without trouble, and most importantly, it was *not* a foregone conclusion. That's similar with everybody, for even when they seem to stop trying (Touko, Youko), Taichi comes and spurs them along: hence, friendship.

It's only in retrospect do the events that led everybody together at that school at that moment and around each other look like a grander and intentionally designed strategic decision, one that may not have been the decision of a God of name Coincidence, this being a story and all, but it certainly was that of a writer intending to emulate it with great precision.

VII.VI Tolkien and Lewis and Dante, oh my

Once a King in Narnia, always a King in Narnia. But don't go trying to use the same route twice. Indeed, don't try to get there at all. It'll happen when you're not looking for it. And don't talk too much about it even among yourselves. And don't mention it to anyone else unless you find that they've had adventures of the same sort themselves. What's that? How will you

know? Oh, you'll know all right. Odd things, they say-even their looks-will let the secret out. Keep your eyes open.
C.S. Lewis

When it comes to religion in narrative, the two writers of reference are J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. The two Inklings have, if not invented, then certainly popularized and/or codified much of the concepts that stand at the base of Cross Channel, both in narrative and religion.

And of course, there's no talking of religion in text without look at possibly the most famous of the traditional ones: Dante's Divina Commedia.

VII.VI.I The Approach to Religion in Narrative: Tolkien

On an ignorant look, The Lord of the Rings has little of the religious; even on a more experienced look, it still has nothing of the *blatantly* religious, least of all of the Christian. In fact, it's even less obviously Christian than Cross Channel is. Unlike the latter, the reality is explicitly told by the author:

The Lord of the Rings is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work, unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like "religion", to cults or practices, in the Imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism.
J.R.R. Tolkien, *Letter 142*

No explicit references, but story and symbolism: that is why understanding the religious subtext of *LotR* even with knowledge of the Bible is no trivial task. To better show the parallels between it and Cross Channel, an example would be necessary; I think the simplest would be the splitting of the figure of Jesus in three characters:

- Aragorn is Jesus as the Returning King in exile, an adult, a warrior, a leader of men and heading back to his rightful throne;
- Frodo is Jesus as the child, an adult in mind but of diminutive size in body, courageous, and tasked with bringing the embodiment of evil

that was spread among men to the fire that forged it, a literal Hell on Earth;
- Gandalf is Jesus as God, a bearded old man dressed in gray (later white) with nearly infinite supernatural power, wise and old but difficult to read, with a peculiar sense of humor, who dies and is returned after confronting a very classic representation of the devil himself.

This is of course a very simplified examination, but going any deeper is beside the point. What is relevant is how Lord of the Rings is simultaneously far more complex but still similar to Cross Channel in the way it 'hides' the religious meaning.

The fall of the Eden of the Hasekura Mansion with its female character repeatedly compared to a snake is child's play to understand compared just to this split or even the moving of the death and resurrection from the obvious candidate of the Jesus-child character to the Jesus-God character[cclxxv].

The reason is that while profoundly religious, Tolkien did not see the point of being blatantly so in writing, and this attitude partially reflects in Cross Channel. After all, the protagonist and audience surrogate himself won't take that stuff seriously if said explicitly.

> I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. I much prefer history – true or feigned– with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse applicability with allegory, but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author.
>
> **J.R.R. Tolkien**

Although religious, and although there *are* similarities, it is foolish to think the War of the Ring to be an allegory for either World War, or to dismiss Sauron as an icon for Hitler. In this refusal of *overt* allegory and the *blatant* preaching that comes with it, Tanaka and Tolkien are similar – more than is

even relevant at this point, as we'll see when examining Cross Channel as a form of history.

There's much more to see than this, but before diving into the specifics, I'm leading off with this parallel. I t may not be intended, but that is so interesting it may well be an explanation as to Sakuraba's otherwise puzzling vagabondism. For not all that wander are lost:

Sakuraba: "In these times journeys are necessary, don't you think so?"
Taichi: "But I think that staying still..."
Sakuraba: "Mine is reversal thinking."
Taichi: "Is-, is it now!"
To dare... to dare to go on a journey.
Sakuraba looked like he was on the winner's side.
CCC4016

The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.
J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Road Goes Ever On*

VII.VI.I.I Escape and Escapism

Taichi's escape into a fantastic if dreary imaginary world is very strictly a meta-escape: Taichi is creating a secondary world within a story, which itself is a fantastic secondary world from that of reality. It's a world good enough that most can't even tell it's not real, but that is a hint as well:

"What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful “sub-creator.” He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is “true”: it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside.
J.R.R. Tolkien *On Fairy-Stories*

Cross Channel's construction is therefore *meta-narrative* , i.e. it's indicative of the story itself. To ensure everybody believes the story constructed, Tanaka simply had the main character himself believe it so profoundly he never seriously questions it.

This recursive creation is not exactly unique to Cross Channel, but in its context it's even more puzzling than it being hidden in the first place: it would mean that Taichi is avoiding the reality of things.

But is the 'real' world the place in which humans truly belong? It's not quite the case in Christian philosophy, which sees humans belonging with God and not in this half-made penal colony, doomed to eternally repeat its error, setting up Edens only for them to fall without what held the first one up in the first place.

A penal colony is how Taichi describes Gunjou; Kamisaka, the Time Loop and the Hasekura mansion are all described as *miniature gardens* , secluded off from the real world. The Cross World itself is secluded for it in much the similar way, and in this duality we begin to see the point: as Kamisaka is separated from the real world by the mountains, here blatantly representing the barrier between life and death with only one, narrow road that passes straight by religion, and with the Cross World this religion becomes the only *true* way out of the world.

Taichi's escape is not from reality, strictly speaking but from something that isn't *quite* real, which is this exact prison. This is how Tolkien puts it, and it is so eloquent it's worth quoting in full:

> I do not accept the tone of scorn or pity with which “Escape” is now so often used: a tone for which the uses of the word outside literary criticism give no warrant at all. In what the misusers are fond of calling Real Life, Escape is evidently as a rule very practical, and may even be heroic. In real life it is difficult to blame it, unless it fails; in criticism it would seem to be the worse the better it succeeds. Evidently we are faced by a misuse of words, and also by a confusion of thought. Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he

cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it. In using escape in this way the critics have chosen the wrong word, and, what is more, they are confusing, not always by sincere error, the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter.

J.R.R. Tolkien *On Fairy-Stories*

Tolkien here is talking about *stories* , not meta-constructed imaginary worlds, but the concept is simply once removed: Taichi's escape into the imaginary world may be not be entirely without merit or virtue; therefore, by virtue of target if not by meta, the thirst for escape of those who dive into VNs may be no more than a misinformed, if not misapplied, recognition of this.

After all, Taichi is the only one living in the Cross World; other characters Miki first and foremost may accept this quirk of his, but they are off in their *own* escape. And yet, isn't it odd how similar and in fact outright *compatible* the escapes of the other characters are?

It's part of the deceit that most characters most of the time are never actually discussing the physical disappearance of mankind and the concept of imprisonment in another world, yet end up talking as if they were doing so perfectly.

There is the point: because the human condition is shared, the despair of this world is shared; the desire for escape is shared, and so even the *means and the shapes* of the despair and the escape are shared, or rather, easily made compatible.

This is not limited to the characters in the story, but returns in Taichi's past with the people of the Hasekura. This is among the first descriptions of Youko:

I see, it's certain, she lives in a different world from that of the ladies that half-dwell in fantasy.
...in the world called reality.

CCC3025

But, in this reading, is this *escape from reality* truly an error? Were the Hasekuras in the wrong, or was it Youko, who is effectively rejecting this fantasy for a reality that is perhaps more fantastical than the fantasy? This is where Youko's mistake begins being visible, and once more reminds why her room at the Hasekura mansion and her apartment in Kamisaka were identical: *Youko was a prisoner as well* , and of her own devise.

The difference between her and the Hasekuras is that Youko wanted out not of the prison, but *of their escape* . Then again, the Hasekuras didn't forgive her being “wrong”, didn't they? And so the question of whether Taichi was correct to let the Hasekuras treat him as a girl in this game of distance from reality, as well as whether maybe leaving Youko alone would have been better, becomes far more complex than it first appears.

The answer I couldn't give, and I suspect it's not the point of Cross Channel to give it either.

There's more connections between *On Fairy-Stories* and Cross Channel, the first of which reads as almost direct:

For a trifling instance: not to mention (indeed not to parade) electric street-lamps of mass-produced pattern in your tale is Escape (in that sense).
J.R.R. Tolkien *On Fairy-Stories*

In the opening of the story, much ado is made of the nuclear power plant and the abundance of useless lights it produced, including a really awful translingual pun; yet in Taichi's story, those lights are *literally* omitted as the power plant is switched off.

The power plant also hints at the wealth and despondence of the town, which would very easily allow Taichi to play his game on in theoretical perpetuity, and the absence of easy electricity points at Taichi's ultimate eremitism as being distant from the conveniences of the world, but this correspondence between the essay and the story becomes stricter with Cross Channel's subtle but definite rejection of science-fiction as explanation.

The very rejection of forms of communication more modern than the radio in a year, 1998, of ever-expanding Internet communication has this subtext of Reaction of which Tolkien speaks of in the essay. That's because:

> Fairy-stories, at any rate, have many more permanent and fundamental things to talk about. Lightning, for example.
>
> **J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-stories"**

Lightning here is not the simple atmospheric phenomenon, but something greater that comes from above and may influence the story in unexpected ways: Taichi himself describes things like his (further) meetings with Yutaka, Kiri and Sakuraba as “bolts out of the blue”, an expression which is effectively identical in Japanese as well. This once more leads back to a coincidence that isn't, as those (re)meetings were nothing short of fated – if not by God, then, once again, by the author imitating Him.

There is also a fairy-story theme that Tolkien identifies, which returns in Cross Channel: that of immortality, or rather of *serial living*.

> And lastly there is the oldest and deepest desire, the Great Escape: the Escape from Death. Fairy-stories provide many examples and modes of this —which might be called the genuine escapist, or (I would say) fugitive spirit. But so do other stories (notably those of scientific inspiration), and so do other studies. Fairy-stories are made by men not by fairies. The Human-stories of the elves are doubtless full of the Escape from Deathlessness. But our stories cannot be expected always to rise above our common level. They often do. Few lessons are taught more clearly in them than the burden of that kind of immortality, or rather endless serial living, to which the “fugitive” would fly. For the fairy-story is specially apt to teach such things, of old and still today. Death is the theme that most inspired George MacDonald.
>
> **J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-stories"**

The comparison with the discontinuous if eternal living of the Cross World, and the horror of its eternal life where shallow joy, madness and despair are forever one needs no further explanation.

All this said, however, Cross Channel has little of the fairy story as described [cclxxvi] , even if the inspiration appears clear. Consider the opening lines:

These are the recollections of that which is so far gone.
The date alone vague and indistinct, laying at the heart of a dim distant haze.
CCA0001

The first line can be translated more literally (if incorrectly) to “these are my oldest memories”.

As for the beginnings of fairy-stories: one can scarcely improve on the formula Once upon a time. It has an immediate effect.
J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-stories"

With the theme of memories and the distance in time from the present (both release date and possible 'real' world inside the story), what are those lines but a variation of *once upon a time*?

Not a fairy story strictly speaking, then, but what it does have is what Tolkien describes as Fantasy, in particular considering this:

Fantasy, of course, starts out with an advantage: arresting strangeness. But that advantage has been turned against it, and has contributed to its disrepute. Many people dislike being “arrested.” They dislike any meddling with the Primary World, or such small glimpses of it as are familiar to them. They, therefore, stupidly and even maliciously confound Fantasy with Dreaming, in which there is no Art; and with mental disorders, in which there is not even control: with delusion and hallucination.
J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-stories"

All being a dream is technically true; Taichi being mad is technically true; but there is more than just that, or all this analysis would never have been possible. It's at this cross point between Fantasy, Dreaming and Delusion that Cross Channel exists.

Tolkenian Fantasy therefore, and with it an Escape in that sense seen:

> We have come from God and inevitably the myths woven by us, though they contain error, will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light, the eternal truth that is with God. Indeed, only by myth-making, only by becoming a "sub-creator" and inventing stories, can Man ascribe to the state of perfection that he knew before the fall.
> **Humphrey Carpenter *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography***

It's this sub-creation of *Taichi's*, more than Tanaka's, that shows this thirst for a world before the Fall. Not before the fall of Kamisaka, not before the fall of the Mansion, and not even before the fall of the Hasekuras but much much longer before that: before the fall at very beginning, at the very root of all that Taichi is: the Fall of Humans.

VII.VI.I.II Rings and Crosses

Taichi's role as a Magician of sorts has more than a few parallels with Gandalf and magic in Middle-Earth[cclxxvii]. Plus there's the connection of the looks of Gandalf having been inspired by an image of a Shepherd, which is very intentional and leads back to the part about lost sheep and Jesus with it.

But the connection of interest here is about *rings* . Cross Channel its own: the time loop. Representing it as a closed circle is fairly obvious, but things are much more complex than that.

There's the usage of 0 (the Western number), which itself reminds of a circle and therefore a loop [cclxxviii] . When Taichi asks Miki in that reading key game whether she wants to return everything to 0 (in Western number), that's the meaning.

And then there's Taichi's madness, which has him chant “la la la” over and over: in the original Japanese, that's the syllable *ra* , which translated through the Curse of Mikaka returns the Western letter O.

It's no more coincidence than *yu* being eight, which not only represents the perception error throughout, but put sideways the eight is the symbol of

infinity: an eternal, inevitable, unbreakable return to an initial point; no wonder it's easy to misread as two zeroes/Os written side by side [cclxxix] . And with this, Youko, the time loop and the entirety of the cross world are connected – in nonexistence as well.

The symbolism is far deeper than this, and it's in the contrast with Taichi: his name is Kurosu, and as Misato herself reminds, its symbol is X. X and O are connected in Japanese: X represents the failure mark (Batten, Peke...), while O represents correctness. The two are generally inverted in the West, that's why e.g. the PlayStation's controller confirms with the Circle button in Japan but with the Cross button in the West.

Beside the obvious Christian symbolism, the X here represents crossing, which is *momentary* as reminded by the conclusion of the "asterisk" (cough cough) that a third flow would create, and contrasts with the O of the *eternal* loop.

Examined from the Japanese perspective, the X here isn't quite *wrong* and the O here isn't quite *right*, in fact, it's all but the point of the story that it's the exact opposite: Crossing is to be desired even if painful and evanescent, while the Looping is to be avoided even if convenient and safe.

Lord of the Rings doesn't have an explicit Cross symbol, which instead remains the implicit Christianity; there is, however, the symbol of the Eucharist, something round but *filled* : as the Eucharist is bread, there's one more thing that hints at the meaning of the curry bread In Cross Channel. And since we're on the subject of the Eucharist: Taichi, Sakuraba, Tomoki and Misato are not just the most religiously connected characters but also the only known *drinkers* .

Unlike Tolkien, and thanks to this Japanese cultural construct, Tanaka can instead contrast the Ring and the Cross very explicitly without being too blatant.

The One Ring is as evil as the loop, and yet similarly useful: its power hold the *temptation* it has over men. Taichi disarms most of the temptation of the loop when he refuses to do what Miki did and rejects the manipulation of

others, preferring instead to make a few last memories and then letting everyone go their way, away from his game. That's how he avoids making actual use of this ring.

Even then, who knows if he would've had the strength to resist Youko if she hadn't stupidly decided to bring him curry, or if he would've managed to resist killing himself: as with *Rings* , the one to truly win isn't the protagonist, neither Frodo nor Taichi, but something greater, something apparently coincidental: the ending makes Cross Channel an eucatastrophe , like Lord of the Rings is.

But the Ring of the loop is not destroyed; Taichi doesn't have the power to do so. And so it remains forever right there, always next to Taichi, as an abyss in which he can fall at any time; its manipulative power may be disarmed, but Taichi can be destroyed by it nonetheless.

This isn't a despairful contrast, but rather a hint that while there's a similarity here, the two stories are not the same.

VII.VI.II The Approach to Characterization: Lewis' Christianity

The quote that opens this monograph should begin to make sense at this point: it's through a strongly Christian view of humanity that the characterization is constructed, and not simplistic character twists – even when those are present.

What comes just before that quote that opens the book is now of relevance:

> His own grandmother, a truly terrible old woman who had burnt his uncle's fiddle as a Satanic snare, might well have appeared to him as what is now (inaccurately) called "a mere sadist." Yet when something very like her is delineated in *Robert Falconer* and again in *What's Mine's Mine,* we are compelled to look deeper-to see, inside the repellent crust, something that we can wholeheartedly pity and even, with reservations, respect.
>
> **C.S. Lewis "George MacDonald – An Anthology"**

Lewis speaks of someone that MacDonald, all but inventor of the Fantasy genre, knew and then made into a character. I strongly suspect Tanaka made more than a few of the people he knew into characters, starting from Yutaka the former bully.

Yutaka is not a 'good' guy in the strict sense of the word, and while there's plenty he paid physically and mentally to get where he was, there was no guarantee that once he remembered who he was he would regret his actions to the point where he would unflinchingly jump to his death if his former victim asked for it.

That act proves that he had truly repented, but would he without being effectively mind-wiped by Taichi's own behavior? Then again, if Taichi had let that be in the past, could Yutaka could have grown to be something more, and could Taichi have avoided the collapse into his own world?

Because Yutaka's wasn't strictly suicide: it was simply that fatal push that Taichi gave him years before being played back, this time achieving its original intent. To put it in a cliché way, the regret that stole Taichi's hair froze time in that instant, and all that played afterwards was as a dream in which he and his bully have a fresh start, at the end of which both remember and Taichi is given the choice to take the action back: he chose not to.

Yutaka's sin in jumping is no greater than that he had on his shoulders already.

All characters can be taken this way. Any serious examination of Japanese character stereotypes reveals people who are not credible as humans and easy to hate, and I suspect any reader sufficiently versed with anime and the like knows at least a few such characters if not character stereotypes.

Tanaka more or less successfully[cclxxx] manages to show sympathetic sides of characters like tedious tsundere Kiri, the manipulative possessive rich girl Touko, silly dumb Misato, and even the logorrheic, pedantic, badly educated Taichi - all without necessarily portraying them as ultimately positive or shining examples of mankind.

As I have reason to believe Youko and Nanaka, Taichi's mothers, are modeled after Tanaka's very own, they are among the most interesting to examine through this lens.

It's Taichi's recognition of Nanaka that he says calms his turbulent heart, even if his statement of it being “too late” can also mean that Taichi is now a much older man, perhaps soon to be called at God's side; but if the two are seen as one, then the recognition of Nanaka is the recognition of a *good side* of the mother; before it, as Lewis reminds, had to come a form of forgiveness.

Now, Youko is more a bad guy than not, and this is evident; but regardless of how she is basically compared to the devil, and may well be one, *as a person* she doesn't *necessarily* have the worst intentions at heart, did she?

The Hasekuras may have been correct to reject the outside world, and Youko wrong to seek it, but the Hasekuras were wrong to reject Youko for her origins. When Taichi didn't do that, she fell for him whether she realized it or not, whether it was something *very very wrong* inside her that caused that.

And when the Shinkawas attacked them, well, nobody can seriously say they had it coming.

Even when she burns away the diaries she has a point: they are what proves Taichi's endlessly repeating sins. Keeping those memories for herself might alleviate the burden for Taichi, whether that was her explicit intent or not.

Whatever the metaphor or the allegory, however long before she might have died, when she cries in the very finale, wishing that she had done better, she's not insincere. She may be a bad guy, but her portrayal is neither entirely negative, nor ultimately sympathetic.

There is no trace in her of the simplistic anti-hero construction that starts from a fundamentally perfect character and adds "flaws" like so much ticking of boxes, nor is her characterization ambiguous.

At the end, she's not so much redeemed at the end as *redeemable*, understandable and pitiable but never wholly sympathetic. She can do better; she hasn't. Maybe she will, maybe she won't.

But as said, Nanaka is not flawless either. In fact, put together, the portrayal of the Mother figure remains fairly negative: Nanaka may sound like she's more open to dialogue than Youko, who prefers monologuing and screw who listens (even Taichi, ironically), but all of Nanaka's chats are in the end replayed monologues where she played all the parts.

Nanaka had a point (Taichi *was* a baby), where Youko has not; and in this union of the two characters we see a woman who never really accepted that his son had grown up, and who kept treating him like a baby well into maturity. Surely not an uncommon thing to do, but not the right thing to do either.

Regardless, what *isn't* here is as relevant as what is. There's no one who was Born With The Evils; no card-carrying villain; no one has Idiot Balls or Villain Balls for that; no simplistic Japanese stereotype, not even ones that are *merely* subverted; no one who is consciously aware of everything that happens to themselves; no one who is more or less omniscient; no trauma counselings and hugs that solve everything.

And most importantly, no generic characters with one glaring weakness, one physical trait and some kind of backstory event - and called "three-dimensional". In fact, Taichi's fear of blood, white hair and nasty background are all but *flaunting* that sort of crappy characterization, even more so than his overwrought but technically nonsensical speech.

If there is a villain in Cross Channel, that's human nature; that's everyone's struggle in this story. Even Youko is only the villain in the measure that she represents this.

Like Tolkien, before heading deeper into interpretative themes, an interesting parallel that may have well been intentional:

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket — safe, dark, motionless, airless — it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.
C.S. Lewis *The Four Loves*

I prefer times where the tension can be kept high.
In times where it can't, my heart sinks.
To somewhere deep.
An abyss that sunlight doesn't reach.
A place that makes you forget all the light, that swallows whole all that desires but to live as an Individual.
A place where this thing called a heart is unnecessary.
Being there for long eventually makes this frozen heart degenerate into a pure volition to live.
There's this hallucination that I am as if something that lives deep beneath the seas.
CCC3015

VII.VI.II.I Relearning the Same Lessons

We have to be continually reminded of what we believe. No belief will automatically remain alive in the mind. It must be fed.
C.S. Lewis

The thing about the message in Cross Channel is that Taichi learns it quite quickly, at least a form of it, and then forgets it, over and over.

In the first week, in the infirmary scene, he learns – and already sounds like he's re-learning – how other people can help him solve his problems, or help him feel emotions, that he on his own could never do. Keep this bit in mind:

When I have worry that I cannot resolve alone, a single solitary word from another erases it.

I believed that people desire reciprocal communication is for the sake of that.
With words, with the body, with cellphones.
...with intercommunication.
CCA0017A

In his second week he learns – the hard way – that these times cannot last, and that all must fall down eventually. As if he hadn't seen this all the way from the Hasekura mansion, when he said that Downfall is inherent! Back then, he even correctly attributed it to the Providence that here is more often called coincidence.

In his third week he learns that he should've forgiven Yutaka, which he more or less already accepted was a mistake long before, and confesses his sin publicly.

In his fourth week he learns that the hokora system can't be abused; but this is just an extension of all the above, as abusing the hokora would be the construction of an Eden.

In his fifth week he learns the same *again*! Look at this:

Taichi: "Intercommunication is the skill, the art, the technology people use when they desire connection, isn't it?"
Taichi: "Telephone, CB, radio, television, mail, cellphone, conversation, letters..."
Taichi: "They cannot become one with who's on the other side. But for that one hour, one moment, one occasion they can feel they are crossing."
Taichi: "That's what being a human is."
CCD0023

On the sixth week he sends everyone back, learning forgiveness (Misato and Tomoki), proper distance (Touko), confessing your sins (Kiri), lives an entire life compressed (Miki), applies to one of his friends who was more or less there anyway (Sakuraba), deals with his past (Youko)... and then learns the point *yet again*:

People want people to be there.
They want to feel them nearer.
To be reassured that someone will be there even before they extend their hands.
That is what they want to obtain.
And therefore, people call out:
with telephone, with words, with letters, with behavior.
...with the radio.
So that they can get someone somewhere to listen.
That is their wish.
CCX0001

And on the seventh week he rested. Sleep, Kurosu-chan[cclxxxi].

The lessons he learns he re-learns over and over and over again. They don't stick. They don't remain. And what's worse, and as visible in what and where he learns the lessons, even accepting the existence of the time loop that is *not* what makes him forget.

All the lessons he learns he has known more or less long before the loop phenomenon begins, and he is *still* learning them after he dodges the reset.

Lewis shows the point in a single quote:

My own experience is that when I first became a Christian, about fourteen years ago, I thought that I could do it on my own, by retiring to my rooms and reading theology, and I wouldn't go to the churches and Gospel Halls[...]. If there is anything in the teaching of the New Testament which is in the nature of a command, it is that you are obliged to take the Sacrament, and you can't do it without going to Church.
Walter Hooper *God in the Dock*

This further hints at Curry being self-study, among other things. And that's why Taichi runs at the hokora on Sunday before noon, without fail: this is what *avoiding the loop* truly means. After all:

Each day we are becoming a creature of splendid glory or one of unthinkable horror.
C.S. Lewis *Mere Christianity*

VII.VI.II.II Becoming What You Pretend to Be

"Christianity is a world that is a great sculptor's shop. We are the statues and there a rumor going around the shop that some of us are some day going to come to life."
C. S. Lewis

Taichi and Youko being made into dolls is an important part of their backstory, provided the two can even be separated at all because of it, but the concept of *living dolls* ties directly into Lewis' vision of the human being in the fallen world as little more than fake things, that can only be made *alive* through contact with something greater.

This isn't exactly new to Cross Channel, of course; while it isn't strictly a Christian story, Pinocchio is on the exact same theme to make a fairly obvious example. The difference with how many deal with this concept and Cross Channel is that dolls aren't just used to make trite allegory on the human condition; humans *are* dolls in this world.

As long as they inhabit the fallen world, humans will always be torn between higher and lower impulses; there is one part that aspires to greatness and belongs to someplace greater, and one that doesn't belong there, and may aspire to nothing of the sort. Duality that is at work in every part of Cross Channel, from Inner Kamisaka and Outer Kamisaka to the attempt at constructing Alter Egos (in defiance of God), and should come to no surprise that this duality is also present in the characters themselves.

This concept, Biblically, is about being *in* the world, but not *of* it: and the existence of a Taichi *of this world*, together with a Taichi *in* this world explains a great many mysteries, because it reveals how yet another lie shows the way to a greater truth: when it's referred to "Taichi A" and "Taichi B" it's not a question of parallel worlds and MWI, but of this exact dichotomy.

In other words, despite MWI being denied in story, these two Taichis *still exist* and are philosophically separate!

This finally answers the question still left suspended at the end of the Miki route: why is she lying to Taichi in that odd overcomplicated way? The answer is that she isn't, she is fairly clumsily attempting to explain to him *this precise point* while still ensuring she plays along to his game, which she understands she can't break him out of - as him inevitably hallucinating the deaths of all is part of what makes her realize the futility of her behavior.

When she says that this is not their original world, *this is what she means* for humans do not belong on Earth. She uses the exact words:

Miki: "And, maybe, Sakakibara-sensei was also killed, I think."
Miki: "Because a corridor in the Institute was stained with blood."
Taichi: "...was it... me?"
Miki: "The Senpai of this world."
Taichi: "I've..."
Miki: "Of this world!"
CCC4025

The one who is a killer, the one who is unrepentant and perhaps irredeemable is the Taichi *of this world* , the Taichi that wants to be in the fallen world, away from God. When Tanaka says in the Materials Book interview that the Taichi in Another Story is not *quite* "our" Taichi, this is what he means. After all, that's still an alternate Miki Route scenario.

Hot.
Sunlight.
Burning me.
I am burning.
Because I'm a sinner.
Just recompense.
But... it hurts.
CCZAS

And *unrepentant* sinners go to Hell. Of course, the very final lines of Another Story makes it questionable whether this Taichi repented or not; then again, still being the "same" Taichi in this philosophical and theological sense, perhaps something changed. There's also a further parallel between Miki smacking him in the head and her talking to him about Sakakibara's diary now.

But Miki's attempt is successful: when Taichi implements the *alternate world* into his Settei, he's now understood and accepted how he can be one thing as well as another, something base that yet has the possibility of transcending that base. Taichi is no longer stuck in the concept of being unable to ever change away, because he remembers he's *literally* not the same person every week. Or even simultaneously, which plays again in his split personality concept.

This is where we reconnect to seeds of persimmon. When Taichi and Miki consider themselves insects, they are paradoxically correct: insect *larvae*, to be precise:

Sakuraba: "I was thinking it was ammonite, but it was a beetle larva."
CCD0002

Sakuraba thought it was something inanimate, but it was something animate that resembled it. This is the greater sense of the Seeds of Persimmon; a toasted peanut can grow into a tree when it's just mistaken for a toasted peanut by someone who cannot see it for anything else.

And the simultaneous assertion that yes, Taichi is perfectly right to think himself heterogeneous: he does not belong to this world, but not in the sense of nihilism and all those despairful visions of Man as nothing but matter.

But *matter* is what he risks become again, as to be human is a process of *becoming* and this becoming is a daily job, a becoming that is as if it had only begun every day (or week).

Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.

They are told they ought to love God. They cannot find any such feeling in themselves. The answer is the same as before. Act as if you did.
C.S. Lewis

You become what you *act* to become, day after day; and so, what Taichi practices to become daily is a problem. He even admits it:

If I'm pretending to be a person, nothing but pretension is what my self will become.
CCD0021

This is Taichi's problem: he keeps pretending he is a monster pretending to be a human. As he keeps practicing this, he becomes less *human* and more a *pretending monster*. Now, the question may be open on whether Taichi is an actual murderer; from the absence of time loop implying he can't quite kill everybody with them still being there to the Hasekura massacre that may not have been, whether Taichi *has* killed is uncertain.

But his sin is great regardless; his lack of forgiveness sure but that's just the representation of the Original Sin – there is a far greater risk he runs into currently in how he keeps at the absolute very least *imagining* that he's a murderer.

If we are what we pretend to be, and Taichi continues pretending he's a murderer, and continues imagining and planning and executing (at least in his mind) the massacre of all those who are around him, then it may be only a question of time before he loses his already frail grip on reality and the imagined becomes real.

In this sense, the hallucinations are more visions of a possible future.

Miki, the pupil, was acting similarly:

Miki: "I just don't get people's pain or anything of the sort at all, so,"
Miki: "I'm just something that lives on pretending to be a person."
[...]
Miki: "Senpai, you're not camouflaging."
Miki: "You're just... trying to be a human."
Miki: "And, the one who was really a camouflaged parasite... was me."
CCC4021

That will be part of why she abandoned the 98 Game. On the other hand, look at Youko when she's finally confronted at the end of her route:

The face that looked back at me yet resembled a wax model.
CCD5001

Whether she exists or not, she was *still* a doll. She still didn't *want* to be anything more, and in fact wanted to simply be one with Taichi, as if putting two things of this world together somehow created anything greater.

What it means for her to at least admit to her betrayal of Taichi considering she doesn't quite exist is far less difficult than figuring out her odds of improving on the other side[cclxxxii].

VII.VI.III The Right Way Lost: Radio Croce e la Commedia

Where the two authors had largely thematic and metaphorical parallels, those with Dante's 13th century poem start far more literal than even those with Tolkien's. In the opening of the Commedia:

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai in una selva oscura, che la diritta via era smarrita.[cclxxxiii]

Dante – or rather, Protagonist Dante, who isn't *literally* the author – becomes metaphorically lost in his life, and also literally lost on a path. He is in the darkness, but yet there is still the light of the sun (God). He finds three animals: a lynx (or otherwise a small feline), a lion and a wolf, representing his sins – interpretations vary, but lust, violence and greed are generally accepted. He is repelled by them back into the true darkness of

sin, and down even further into it, where he however meets a spiritual guide, Virgilio, and is led to the beginning of his tour of hell.

In the beginning of Cross Channel (though not so in the telling), Taichi is lost after the miserable failure of his Fixed Pattern and is literally walking down the path of the mountain, ahead of the other characters.

The animal themes were seen: cats, lions and wolves all, and Taichi is compared to all three and most of the sins associated with these animals in the Commedia well fit him; and around here is where the non-events of Another Story would take place, where he would give completely in to his sinfulness – but he is pushed back a little towards the light by Nanaka (his spiritual guide, in a sense), Miki and the Providence of coincidence.

When he reaches the Cross World, however, he is in the Hell of his own devise and the only way out is through.

This would continue with parallels with Inferno[cclxxxiv] (the opening routes, which paradoxically should be heaven on Earth for Taichi!), Purgatorio (the Sendback routes) and Paradiso (the ending and, perhaps, what lies beyond).

...but this is a very very rushed look at little more than part of the first Canto, and for a reason: the amount of parallels already visible might require lengthier research and examination themselves, far more so than the other authors referenced (and still only largely touched).

The other problem is that Tanaka won't necessarily be basing himself off the original or an English translation, but a Japanese translation. And since there's like ten of them, just tracing *which* is going to be a task!

But I think I got the right one, because there are a few very interesting things right in the very beginning; I'll keep the translation very literal as it highlights the points of interest:

人の生の道なかば、
ふと気がつくと、私は正しき道の失われた
暗き森の中をさまよっていた

In the middle of the road of a person's life
I suddenly come to notice that I had lost the correct road
and was wandering in the heart of dark woods

“Coming to notice” and “wandering” are terms that return in Cross Channel. They're not kept in the translation as references to the Commedia, and the reason is precisely because of these differences in the translation: the Japanese edition is fairly poetry-oriented[cclxxxv], but it loses literal accuracy. Neither of these terms recurring in Cross Channel are in the actual original text.

In other words, as this monograph is excessively long already, further detailed examination should be left to anyone crazy and/or intrepid enough (and preferably trilingual) to try; given the Commedia's sometimes-nickname of *the Summa in verse*, I would recommend familiarity with Thomas Aquinas' work at the absolute very least.

Best of luck to anyone willing to attempt.

I leave with one last thing of interest, which is what Dante consider *rationality* to be: the ability to see God. Taken in this sense, Taichi's unstable rationality, its loss and its recovery takes a very interesting and purely spiritual meaning.

VII.VI.II.I Acerbic Satire

Behind the religious allegory and the poetry, the Commedia is also a fierce satire. There are references to historic and then-current figures and events, and Dante pulls no punches – provided one can understand who or what he is talking about, something not always easy even when divorced by the realities of the politics of 13th Century Florence.

We've already seen how Cross Channel pulls no punches when it comes to governmental incompetence, it's written all throughout the concept of Gunjou as well as the existence of an Inner Kamisaka: allegory for religion (and more) or not, the politicians here find it easier to build a town in the middle of an inaccessible valley than admit the screwed up the maps.

The story itself calls Japan's public broadcasting station NHK a bunch of guerrilla fighters extorting money from people, and the Curse of Mikaka refers to the Japanese public telephone company. As the idea that someone like Taichi needs weapons for self-defense is never actually made a joke, all that's left is to figure out what pen name Tanaka uses to write political columns.

When it comes to science-fiction, the Many-Worlds Interpretation is internally rejected, and given the Christian subtext, the coincidences that are nothing of the sort, and the sheer volume of variables that are "just right" for the story to work exactly as it should, it's easy to guess in favor of *what*.

This is a story that humiliates the inattentive and the pretentious; the first will be left endlessly puzzled as to the reasons and the conclusion of all this, the second will find themselves unable to understand the *actual* depth of large parts of dialogue that *looks* pretty, but has depths entirely outside the prettiness and sometimes in opposition to it - especially when it comes to self-centrism and nihilism, or the concept of man as nothing more than a beast.

That the two categories of readers often overlap is just the cherry on top.

There is one example that I want to examine closely: when Taichi betrays Tomoki by spoiling his manga. The manga is called Psychoman, which is no reference but a hint at a pun that goes from the very first word of the story: as we've seen, *saiko* can also mean psychopath, and Sakuraba proposes it as a title of the VN.

As the recap of the plot of this manga effectively titled after the VN appears entirely irrelevant, it follows that looking at it through the reading keys seen so far is at least to be tried. The result is very nice:

Taichi: "Yatsuka dies, the true culprit is proven to be Masaki."
CCA0007

Yatsuka *eight*-bundle[cclxxxvi]. Masaki 真崎 pure/true Saki, the same as in Tasaki of the Tasaki store, already mentioned as a Greek chorus for the Christianity of the story and more. Pure Tasaki, or Christian Tasaki, is the real culprit for killing the Bundle of Eights.

"Eight" represents Youko, already seen to be at the very least under the influence of the Biblical serpent AKA the devil; a bundle of them would be the part of men and women that is corrupted by worldly influences.

The true culprit for her death in the story is claimed to be coincidence AKA Providence AKA God: *that* is the spoiler.

Tomoki: "Dontcha spoil the rest! And absolutely not the ending of the Islands of the Demons!"
CCA0007

Although archipelago would be a more straightforwards translation, the most famous example of the original 列島 rettou "chain of islands" is Japan itself. The term 魔獣 that I left as simply 'demon' does indicate a strictly *supernatural* beast: this is Japan, under the domain of the Prince of This World.

The conclusion?

Taichi: "Father Anderson rescues the kidnapped Yoriko with help from a friendly spy."
CCA0007

The Christian priest (specific) needs little further explanation[cclxxxvii]; Yoriko is written as Dependent Child, and is a little harder to see, but only a little. The concept of *excessive dependence* is at the base of the idea of Alter Egos, and is in general criticized as the problem of mankind, which tries to find completeness in each other in rejection of God. It is Youko that demands Phenomenization and the building of Alter Egos from Taichi, after all. Yoriko is therefore Mankind, kidnapped by the Demons.

She is rescued by a Catholic priest with a very foreign name, i.e. by Christianity and Catholicism specifically, which came to Japan as it first came to Earth, but also with the help of a friendly spy. Now, this part wasn't quite seen when discussing Lewis' Christianity, but the whole scene ties to the concept of Divine Invasion, with God as an invading force literally assaulting a world taken over by the Devil. A friendly spy would then be one of the locals who have converted and assist this Invasion themselves.

Since the topic on discussion is Japan, the Island Chain, the story of Psychoman is about foreign Christian priests bringing the Gospel to Japan with the help of friendly locals, in order to rescue mankind from evil. Needless to say Tanaka would be one of those friendly locals, and Cross Channel one of the Channels in which the message of the Cross is spread – that's why Taichi essentially becomes a priest himself, making his sermon at the antenna at the end.

Tomoki, who likes his black humor, being the one that reads this comic is thematically coherent with him being one of the most religiously connected characters, and how in the end he can forgive his sister and perhaps even be miracled.

Taichi reading ahead also means he's farther ahead in these things than Tomoki: after all, Taichi at that point already understands the hypocrisy of Tomoki having friendly fights with *him* but treating *his sister* with serious contempt; it's the rest of his problems that don't make him realize he's doing the same with Sakuraba and Yutaka, who hadn't died yet in that flashback. And even if he had realized, *acting on it* is no easy thing.

That they have a fight based on *this spoiler* is ironic on more than one level: it can be read as Tomoki trying to stop Taichi from revealing how the entire story works behind the curtain.

VII.VII Layer-VII: The History of the World from Noah's Ark to Present Day

And finally we get to here, the deepest layer of all. We return to Tolkien's quote on allegory, and what he preferred in alternative:

I much prefer history – true or feigned– with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse applicability with allegory, but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author.
JRR Tolkien

Cross Channel doesn't have much of the fake history, it being set in the real world at some level. But the *historical setting* is more specific than an eternal 1998, and the exact location in time is derived from the Bible.

In Genesis 6-9 , Noah and seven other people survive the Great Flood that wiped away mankind, together with all the animals they brought with them. In Cross Channel, Taichi and seven(?) other people survive the Wave of Denpa that wiped away mankind, together with all the animals they brought with (only the microorganisms inside of them).

The parallel is direct and inescapable: the basic storyline of Cross Channel is based directly on the Biblical story of Noah and the Great Flood. And this, finally, allows to show what I consider the greatest troll of the story, greater than even not being sci-fi at all: being post-flood means the story is *literally* pre-apocalyptic, as the Book of Apocalypse would be yet to be written, or at the very least come true at that point in Biblical history.

In fact, the Apocalypse - or the literal coming true of the prophecy within - is what Taichi is waiting for in the end. Compare the final line of the story:

Until that day when the sky itself has finally passed...
T1.PNG

with this:

And I saw a new sky and a new earth, for the sky and the earth of before had passed, and the sea was no more.
Revelations 21:21

The comparison is not neat, but with the basis in Noah and the Flood and the rest of the religious subtext there is plenty of other evidence to suggest

this as the point. Taichi intends to go on until the end of the current Creation, and the Universe is made again new, one with God.

If his faith is in something and Christianity is truth, then he will one day die and go to Heaven, where he will *still* need to wait until the end of the world and the Second Coming.

But would his slice of heaven be any different, if so? Would he even realize that he has died? Unknowable, but if not, then the possibility that he has died at some point after the final week – perhaps in it – would make an interpretation of Taichi having died at the end plausible.

In fact, Taichi's death was possible at any time, if we take a more Dantesque/Catholic view and suppose Purgatory exists and can be passed through; Layer-II doesn't sound like a mere troll anymore, doesn't it.

This also makes the lines in the VN that ridicule stories based on the end of the 20th Century meaning the end of mankind take on a very subtly ironic meaning, rather than being the hypocritical humor they appear to be. Once more, readers who don't pay attention are the worst off.

The question of this chapter is more complex than even simply figuring out another troll. The eight people that survive the Great Flood are said to be the founders of all the nations of the world. Is this applicable to Cross Channel as well?

The answer is a very definite yes, with the caveat that this is *not* a straightforwards allegory but something that very much fits the Tolkenian concepts of *history* and *applicability*; the comparisons are *not* 1:1 with actual nations of the world. There are still recalls, but nothing straightforwards.

The concept of nationality is surprisingly widespread for an interpretative layer that is subtle even by the standards of Cross Channel. Consider the first draft of Taichi's address, which is to be interpreted as the script of the story:

We are known as the Gunjou Institute Broadcast Club. The area within the range of this broadcast is presently becoming exclusive possession of us all. All present must speedily discard their armaments and---
CCA0015C

There's apparently a Misatoian empire:

Taichi: "No ma'am, this is the ordinary for a soldier of the Empire."
CCA0011A

...which is of course the Commonwealth of Panchiralandia:

Banzai for the founding of the Commonwealth of Panchiralandia!
A wonderful country that one!
A pleasant country!
May it be everlasting!
CCB0005

Commonwealth, Empire, close enough; Kiri's in it:

Because there also exist the expectation within myself that via making Kiri work on top of the stepladder the blessed event that is the Foundation of Panchiraland will occur.
CCC3015

But not all is quiet on the <%CompassDirection> front:

Misato: "It is sort of a cold war."
CCA0022B

and

Taichi: "How come you're from Kanto but you drop in some fake-Kansai accent affectations in your sentences?"
CCA0029

Looks like Panchiralandia and Tomoki's own country don't see eye-to-eye. In fact:

Taichi: "GIB MII GUM, GIB MII CHOCOLEETO."
Tomoki: "...but you always carry candy around, Taichi..."
[...]
He seriously produced some chewing gum and chocolate.
CCC0040

This unfortunately is not obvious without some cultural notes , the gist being that Tomoki is playing an American soldier and Taichi a Japanese – no wonder why Taichi keeps misnaming his purely antagonistic "club" as the Peacekeeping Corps. And so, more than inter-country fighting, there seems to be a civil war in Panchiralandia, and the soldiers are in revolt.

Lest it appear anyone is being paired off to a specific country with that, Taichi's sense of nationality is even more off than his gender's. Right above he was Japanese, but here he's Prussian:

Taichi: "Kurosu Taichi has never and not for one instant forgot his Prussian soul!"
Misato: "Are you not a prototypical mongoloid[cclxxxviii]?"
Taichi: "It is the Nihonprussia anyway."
Miki: "It's just like the Japanese Alps isn't it."
CCC4001

Now he fashions himself after the Americans:

That provided, this door is no tetragon, but rather a three-angled polygon (ULOL)
* ULOL = Taichian lolspeak. A subspecies of the common LOL, meaning an U.S. American style laughter.
When Americans finish saying a joke (no matter how lame!), they have the truly strange habit of laughing by themselves. Because of this, their use of less-than-exceptional material does not appear as spontaneous, but rather as having a masochistic intent[cclxxxix].
CCB0008B

And that random thing about *biorhythms* very much fits into all this.

So far, so random; let's take it back a little.

Noah and the seven are considered the *founders* of all the nations in the world; to better understand this interpretation, there's two things to explain: one, how eight people can represent the entirety of humanity, and two, how come they all seem to survive and have survived indefinitely since the Flood event.

A popular comics from Cross Channel's far future can explain the first part of the metaphor relatively simply: it's sorta like Hetalia , but not as on the nose. Hetalia is neither a reference nor plausibly inspired by this [ccxc] , of course, so it's merely a helpful similarity.

In short, Inner Kamisaka represents *the whole world* in this interpretation, and the eight characters aren't just the founders of all nations, but they *are* the nations: they are icons for all their populations and cultures, of the descendants of Noah, an unknown number of years after the flood [ccxci] .

Because this is no allegory, there's little point in attempting to pin this character to that nation, and this becomes even more impossible considering the answer to the second question. The time loop has been considered mostly laterally, as a metaphor for how people (especially Taichi) lose their learned lessons and their rightful way over and over and over through their life; here, it's a little more literal: the characters between “loops” are not the same.

Every end of every loop is some kind of upheaval that ends with the cards shuffled and... reassigned pretty much identically to how they were before. That's because the lateral metaphor of the loop is not lost, merely expanded exponentially: this is about the world not learning its lessons and its Nations continuously falling into the same errors.

And so there are similarities and parallels with more or less current nations, because nations of the sort, or rather their *behaviors* , have existed all

throughout; as the people, so the nations.

Let's look at these nations.

- Sakuraba and Touko are wealthy countries, to the East and to the West. There is more than a little of the America in Sakuraba, with his religion, his “English”, and his blond hair; of course his religion is entirely under the conscious level, his English is better visible as an ability to read English phrasebooks, and his blond hair is tinged – plus his impotence – all show that to find allegory one simply has to stretch believability.
  Touko with her constant (and very literal!) saber rattling are more proper of a third world power than that of a real wealthy country.
- Miki and Kiri are poorer countries, North and South.
  And they are planning Secession from the rest; but the poorest of the two is doing much more than putting Kiri at war with other nations in order to be left alone as the others fight.
- Misato and Tomoki may well be the same country, but they are fighting in a cold war that is just a civil war left festering. And at times, it explodes.
- Youko stays off to her own, but keeps everyone under surveillance and is at the forefront of the arms race and military training. She has no problems with preemptive attacks to “defend” Taichi.
- And Taichi... is a little more complex than even just this.

For him we go back to his first re-encounter with Yutaka, where the *Nations* thing is played hard but not in a way that immediately fits this interpretation:

At times like this, the Japanese immediately say 'I'm alright, I'm alright', and who knows how they actually are.
[...]
The Japanese was overwhelmed and nodded unsteadily.
[...]
The Japanese stated his date of birth.
[...]
Taichi: "Our races are different but let's do our best, you Nipponjin!"

Shinkawa: "...no, however I look at you, you are also Japanese."
CCA0011C

Yutaka is Japanese, Taichi thinks he isn't, and Yutaka says he is. This is something that goes well beyond the Nations of the World, because the Japan they are referring to is something that would not exist in the non-allegorical World that Inner Kamisaka is.

And yet, a Japan of sorts exists there: the Japan that's outside of Inner Kamisaka. If the latter is the world, then Japan is what exists on the other side of the mountains and is unreachable if not by going through the correct and narrow road, for while there is theoretically a machined way to go there, it has long ago stopped working.

In short, Japan is to this world as Heaven is to the real one. It therefore takes the place Narnia has in C.S. Lewis' stories: the place where people truly belong, even if there is nothing in the story that says it even exists outside of the unreliable flashbacks and the recollections little more than legend of the people there, most of which would never even begin to believe that they're no longer in their home world.

This is the sense in which Taichi can be Japanese but think himself foreign, often American[ccxcii]. And so, when he says that Yutaka has Taepodong-class eyes, i.e. something with the striking range that could threaten Japan as well as the whole world, it's another hint that Taichi believes Yutaka to be an unrepentant monster[ccxciii].

Therefore, *being Japanese* here means something very different; for the Nations in this World are something separate from the True Nation, which exists Outside.

VII.VII.I Dictatorship by Loli-King

As a character, Miki uses the time loop by living at the hokora in order to manipulate the situation. Her goal is to keep the situation *stable*, or rather, the creation of a Utopia, a perfect playground where everyone is happy, but also never really grows – first of all herself. What does it all mean in this interpretation?

Let's start with Kiri. Kiri calls her plan a literal *secession*, so in this interpretation we have one of the poorer countries militarizing, building an arsenal of weapons, and holding the rest at gunpoint until her demands are satisfied. It ends in a massacre, however, when the threat is turned towards Taichi, who has top military power Youko to protect him.

Whether the secession was entirely Kiri's plan, or at least not entirely Miki's idea, what Miki unequivocally *does* do on her own is arming everyone with (water) guns and having pretend wars, complete with her calling Taichi a GI and Taichi having no idea what a Vietcong is[ccxciv].

Them playing water guns instead of working sounds funny, but not when read in this sense: Miki, who makes use of the hokora to predict what people do, is not enabling her World Order by making everybody play at war instead of doing anything productive.

Keeping people distracted is also keeping herself 'safe'. It's every conspiracy theory ever, and it was all the fault of lolis! It was to be expected; lolitas inevitably begin to demand Dictatorship by Loli-King[ccxcv].

This metaphorical meaning may well be the reason that rooftop scenes in the later Misato/Touko and Youko routes don't seem to fit the Complicated interpretation all that much: they need to be read through *this* sort of high-level interpretations. But once the concept of Taichi's 98 Game being a Biblical allegory is added back to that interpretation, it all again makes sense.

The question now returns to the time loop. At this level it's nothing but the disconnection between generations, epochs, Ages and more - no allegories; so what is it in and around the hokora that allows Miki to "avoid" it, or rather, predict what everyone will do and thus resist, in a sense, the cycles of history represented by the time loop?

Let's look at the hokora carefully as a symbol. It is a *container* , and inside it there is text describing *events of the past* that have been forgotten by most, and which let anyone who reads them understand and predict how the

world works, split into a plethora of books. Given everything that surrounds it, this container is set in a place where the God of Abraham resides.

The comparison is clear: the hokora is like the Ark of the Covenant. Because it's not an allegory, its contents are not just the tablets with the Ten Commandments, but a reliable chronicle of the history of mankind, not just in the letter but in *predictability of behavior* that said letter allows to deduce.

Being that the entirety of this concept of predictable behavior stems from it, inevitably what we're discussing is the Bible. For just as the history of the early Jews was nothing but a repeat of "God says to do something, people say no, God sends them punishment, people beg forgiveness, God says to do something, repeat", the history of mankind is the history of a predictable people.

What is the lesson of history but that no one learns from it and are therefore condemned to repeat it, and all those clichés that yet are cliché *for a good reason*.

That is the doom of mankind, to repeat its failure over and over and over in similar ways until they give up to the inevitable, or the time of the world comes at an end, perhaps both. This is mankind's sin, and it will keep repeating and piling up to the sky, forever recorded and remembered:

Taichi: "Acquiring as much happiness as you like is great, sure. But sin..."
I push down a bunch of notebooks.
They collapse via domino effect, covering up part of the ground.
Taichi: "Sins will be recorded forever and more, won't they?"
Taichi: "How can I be able to have a life without stress... with that..."
Taichi: "What's to be carefree about."
Taichi: "...this here is... hell."
[…]
Taichi: "If the world really gets reset, then why are all the sin I've committed until now recorded in here!"
Taichi: "What Yutaka did to me will never, ever become fiction."
Taichi: "Sins will just keep on existing in there forever, won't they?"

But even if the books are burned, the tablet broken, the Ark lost or destroyed this wouldn't change; Youko may not have had the complete worst of intentions with her action, but she was still wrong because of this.

Human nature will not be denied; all sin stems from the Original Sin, and all are as Adam and Eve in their everyday; as long as there are humans, what they do will be predictable. And that's what Miki exploits to create her rules for the world, her own dominion and rule.

However, while human nature is predictable, the world itself is not so simple that it will lend itself to guidance:

"[God] will not be used as a convenience. Men or nations who think they can revive the Faith in order to make a good society might just as well think they can use the stairs of heaven as a shortcut to the nearest chemist's shop."
C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

Hence her failure throughout her countless attempts.

So, what changes when Taichi decides to break this endless pattern and send everyone home? And how?

VII.VII.II Sub-creation

Let's go back to the Psychological Interpretation for a moment: Taichi is the avatar of the Person, and Nanaka - now it should be clear - represents the Divine Invasion, that smacks into him every day towards school and towards home, pretty much invariably.

The world is all but a Purgatory, as said, and Taichi is the only one that can send everybody home. He's the narrow path, after all through him or through no other way. He gets his Passion when tortured by the embodiment of Teh Devils [tm] which is Youko, and then he stays back into this more-like-hellish landscape after basically saving everyone else, to preach to those on this side (and the other) about Life and Jesus and Misc Epithets.

Transplanted in the Religious interpretation, Tanaka would be God, Taichi would be Jesus and Nanaka would still be the same. So basically we're done, right ? Open and shut. But the Tolkenian concept of *secondary creation* , of Sub-creation, gets rid of that one very quickly.

Because Tanaka wrote this as a religious story in this Tolkenian sense, with applicability and not allegory in mind, what Tanaka is doing is not taking the place of God in his own creation but imitating His work, moving to get closer to Him through the creation of a story that is sufficiently consistent.

This sub-creation is recursive in Cross Channel, as Taichi is himself creating a fake world that is so internally consistent that when seen through his eyes it's difficult to even recognize as such. Hence why the concept of his MWI-Denpa refinement so closely resemble that of an author fixing plot holes as the writing proceeds, to the point where that may well be what happens in more than one case; but the level at which the errors happen makes it difficult if not impossible to tell.

With this sub-creation, t herefore, Taichi is made very much *not* into Jesus: Taichi remains a man, a sinner like many others; the *path he is treading* is the same as Jesus', however . Taichi has nothing of the myth-made real, no prophecies behind him, no similar ities in his backstory, nothing whatsoever that makes him anything but a more or less ordinary man : all he's doing is heading further and further towards religion, and trying to be like Him more and more.

In short, Taichi isn't Jesus, he's merely *striving* to be, with all his failings and all his incompetence. Let's look again at that thing about him being the path, because it's not actually correct: the path is the *gate* which Taichi merely can access for reasons he doesn't understand and likely never will.

While the world may be even a literal Purgatory, making it out would mean going through that gate, which Taichi just happens to be capable of letting others traverse. But look who says to *be* the gate:

Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.
John 10:7-9

And there's that mystery cleared up.

So in the end, what Taichi does isn't so much as redeem the world himself but help those who are around him, if in ways they don't quite understand (nor does he), and with no certainty and no "magic wand" solutions; and then, he makes the Message resound farther.

It would've helped with less of a language barrier, certainly, but there's nothing that Tanaka can do about that...

VII.VII.III Let's Build a Tower, A Tower of Friends

...except maybe discuss it. This is mostly tangential to the above interpretation, but since Another Story is based on Biblical events just like the main scenario is, it's interesting to further examine here.

Right after mankind re-establishes itself post-flood, they build a tower, known as the Tower of Babel, to attempt to reach Heaven. The punishment is a scattering throughout the world of the people, and the confusing of tongues.

Right after the failure of the Camp, Taichi grows unable to tell reality from eroge, and begins to build a tower with which to reach a not-quite-clear “other side”. The punishment is the thinning and rarefaction of people and the confusion of tongues as sarcastically represented by the Curse of Mikaka.

First thing to notice is the sequence of events: as the Great Flood comes before the Tower of Babel, the disappearance of mankind should come *before* the Tower of Friends, but the timeline is very confused due to the multiple layers of hallucinations and troll.

The existence of the Tower of Family in the expanded Youko Route bad ending further suggests that what happened at the Hasekura mansion may not have been a massacre, but it's the internal timeline of AS that's odd.

Although the Curse of Mikaka is the big one when it comes to language confusion, this begins much earlier, after the “first day”. In this "first day", Taichi is apparently sane, and everybody gets along; however, it's all but a stereotyped eroge about high school, cut down and compressed including sort of recapping the boring parts. At the end of this "first day", a tower is built.

On the “second day”, Taichi is still in stereotyped eroge mode, but everybody else isn't. Now, this is something that even many people who know multiple languages don't quite fully grasp, but there exist different languages *inside* the same language; this is often understood as simply “using jargon” or “speaking a lingo”, but that's being excessively reductive on the size of the issue.

One can no more speak to normal people using eroge jargon than one can speak Japanese to someone who doesn't know it. Continuing to do so can and does cause the same level of frustration in the receiver, and its nature as meta-VN is part of why Cross Channel will never be easily accessible to Visual Novel newcomers.

And this irreconcilable difference in language is hammered down at this point of Another Story: Taichi is simply on an alternate language, in fact an alternate script altogether, with regards to the rest of the characters.

The tower is then built “again” - timeline still not clear, but the description is far more thorough – and *then* the Curse of Mikaka takes place. ...except Miki seems capable of understanding him perfectly, and Taichi doesn't seem to have too many problems either:

Miki: *["Uhm... by the way, it looks like you didn't use Kiri-chin as materials, so... where's she?"]*
For some reason, it feels like she's asking about Kiri.
CCZAS

Completely coincidental, I'm sure.

One last detail about Another Story: Miki's torture, which should go without saying is iconic of crucifixion – even more so with the new graphics – ends with Taichi leave for roughly three days... to find Gunjou, the tomb with its open gate, completely empty.

Just in case someone didn't think there was enough Christian symbolism here, I guess.

VII.VII.IV Youko's MWI Explanation Was Correct

While I consider Cross Channel being strictly pre-apocalyptic to be the greatest of trolls, this may be one of the toughest mind screws. After spending an entire chapter showing how her explanation is ridiculous and incorrect in every way, as well as showing intentionality, *after* the concept of God is described it's possible to make a very startling conclusion: with appropriate substitutions, her description of the events was by and large correct.

The split in the world is true, as there is a True World (Heaven) and a Cross World (what we think as the real world). That's why there's little mention of a world C, but rather of a *World B* in which the people of the Club would have fallen: there are only really two worlds.

Interferences and interactions among them are impossible according to science, which rightfully doesn't recognize Heaven as it is lacking in scientific evidence, yet there it is in the hokora, the testimonial and historical evidence of people who have existed before the world was wiped.

This is indeed the true end of the world, its intended fate, at least until the sky falls and the sea is no more – but that, Taichi can only hypothesize.

There are at least two Taichis here, if not Youko and Taichi as non-separate but separate people, then a Spiritual Taichi and a Taichi of This World – one that can aspire to greatness, one that doesn't even wish for it.

And finally, the Many Worlds influence as explained is entirely real - *in Taichi's mind*, and so is his night vision.

More or less everything said there is correct if read in deeper interpretations, largely as a religious metaphor rather than science and sci-fi. The troll of Cross Channel not being sci-fi is not changed with this; it is simply made another lie that shows a greater truth.

But the question that has remained for the longest, to me, was *why Dirac instead of Everett?* Which of course continued with *why Baudelaire for Nietzsche and Kierkegaard for Wittgenstan?* Offhand they seem all random, but Dirac certainly isn't: he is one of the fathers of Quantum Mechanics; he just has nothing to do with MWI.

With a religious interpretation, this can be answered: the point is *fatherhood* . It's fairly obvious when considering Dirac and Everett; while Dirac is certainly not the *lone* father, he is an important figure without which it's unlikely Everett would have elaborated his interpretation. It's not so easy for the other two pairs, but there are still hints that this may be the correct idea.

Wittgenstein adored Kierkegaard, and there are influences:

Wittgenstein told his friend Maurice Drury that Kierkegaard was the most profound author of the nineteenth century and a saint.
Wayne Proudfoot on *A Confusion of the Spheres*
Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews

Consider the parts about *manipulating the reader* and Taichi's idea of the direct deceptions “in the style of the Mein Kampf” that are to him permissible.

There's little of Baudelaire's influence on Nietzsche, in fact, the two philosophers had little in common and only little more of contiguous. Both of them had definitely their influence on Taichi, especially in his rhetorical excesses and nihilism, however.

So why fatherhood? Because it would then point out the reading key: God the Father. The events of this faux-MWI world are nothing but what's permitted, and that's still permitted by the One who decides those laws greater than those of men.

Whether the other two are intended to have the same religious-level reading key as Dirac or not, merely to highlight this absurdity, or something else I missed, what happens in that explanation is therefore similar to what Miki does to Taichi with her lies in the end of her route.

The difference is that neither Taichi nor Youko (if there's a difference) can possibly be said to understand anything of what's going on even at the level Miki does after having had her bantam behind thoroughly kicked by Natural Law.

I suspect this is in part because of how all characters, and maybe so many humans as well, do understand this stuff at *some* level instinctively - that's where his belief of non-belonging becomes validated and a positive, rather than a negative.

There's a more philosophical issue here, however.

Readers who take Youko's explanation on its face would be foolish, for this is a world that runs on precise rules established by a higher authority. It is the Anthropic Principle, Divine Providence and Natural Law that rule here, not MWI.

But I have to wonder: in constructing a respectful Secondary World that parallels real life as interpreted through Christianity and pretty much entirely in avoidance of said allegory, doesn't this lose much of its bite?

Of course Taichi can talk MWI all day and it won't be true – the Author says so. The Christian God may not be proven to the satisfaction of all, but Tanaka is very much tangible, if a bit of a ghost himself.

Even if we are to assume that the reader is still mocked because the rules of the story are established by an Author that is greater than all its creation and

resides outside of its relative space and time, a wise reader could correctly counter that “pseudo-MWI did it” is not functionally difference from Authorial-generated Coincidence. After all, both are authorial decisions.

That would leave the question of the *means* as neutral, much like the question of the age of the world since the Flood. So even a reader that were to agree with Youko would be correct... if not in the way he thinks.

It's in how the reader might then draw the incorrect conclusion that *Author did it* is with this avoided and paradoxically denying the intervention of the creator of this fictional world that said reader would fall into error.

But at that point, the error was to just accept the obvious explanation given uncritically. When the source is a creepy stalker who locks up and repeatedly rapes the protagonist not a few hours of reading later, with the *explicit intent* of making him stop understanding, that reader kind of has mockery coming to them.

VII.VII.V The World's a Stage

Given how the concept of the World being the stage for the Story has been made fairly literal now, there's not much to add to the simple quote; but being that *Romeo* Tanaka took that pen name (from Yamada Hajime) starting around Cross Channel, and that "all the world's a stage" is one of the most famous of the Shakespeare's sayings, it bears to at least have a brief note on the subject.

Not a few years before the formal start of the story, Taichi (and perhaps Youko) play all the roles in a play of *Romeo* and Juliet, and there's the first and obvious connection: the character name. But the bigger connection is Sakuraba, the strongest Christian influence in Taichi's life, perhaps beyond even his dead mother: as the flashback that happens after failing the Youko route and restarting shows, despite Misato calling him, it's *Sakuraba* who helps him out of his shell the most.

And Sakuraba falling for Taichi on sight, and being by him unwittingly helped, was another of those coincidences that sound nothing like coincidences, but rather like this:

In friendship [...] we think we have chosen our peers. In reality a few years' difference in the dates of our births, a few more miles between certain houses, the choice of one university instead of another [...] the accident of a topic being raised or not raised at a first meeting--any of these chances might have kept us apart. But, for a Christian, there are, strictly speaking no chances. A secret master of ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to the disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," can truly say to every group of Christian friends, "Ye have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another." The friendship is not a reward for our discriminating and good taste in finding one another out. It is the instrument by which God reveals to each of us the beauties of others."

C.S. Lewis *The Four Loves*

Consider how the friendship between the three male characters truly started when Sakuraba blurted out a line about buruma out of the blue. And then, since Sakuraba and Yutaka are so closely related, Taichi asked Yutaka his date of birth as quoted when discussing what being Japanese meant here. This concept is there all but referenced.

And that's perhaps nothing compared to how Taichi and Yutaka share their classification system:

Taichi: "She's rank A."
Shinkawa: "Rank A? Is that the highest?"
Taichi: "Nope, there's S above it."
Shinkawa: "Whoa, you rank 'em same as I..."
Taichi: "You, you too?!"
The hell's with me and this guy sharing wavelengths all natural?

CCA0011C

And so:

Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: "What! You too? I thought that no one but myself . . ."

C.S. Lewis

...but the point was Shakespeare, right? So far he's served just as a backdrop. Unfortunately I'm not that well versed on the Bard to say if there's anything more. As with the Commedia, that I leave to some other ~~sucker~~ courageous soul to examine.

VII.VIII The Why: Visual Novel as a Form of Hospice

The answer to *why is Cross Channel written like this* seems fairly conclusively answered; it's a complex Christian story that wants to comment on the human nature from a Christian point of view while staying away from the simple allegory.

But there's more to that than simply why write it like this: there's the question, *why write at all?* Part of it is satisfied by Sub-Creation, I believe, but in the end it's Tanaka's own business why he writes; the question is why would he write Visual Novels, and VNs from a Christian viewpoint of all things when they are targeted to so few people, so unlikely to react well to a Christian viewpoint, and have that little problem of explicit sex scenes that makes it more than a little unbelievable that they even *could* be written from that viewpoint at all.

In short, *what is the message of Cross Channel?*

A person is born alone, and will die alone.
Even if he comes to be on good terms with someone else, in essence he is still alone.
Even communications with reciprocal understanding are not the co-ownership of everything.
This thing, this living, is a lonely thing.
The ways with which to swindle that loneliness are... precious.
And I think, isn't it just for that purpose... that other people exist?
Do you have any memories of being together with someone?
Those are things with value.
Please make sure you never forget them.
Because those are the sole and only support for someone who is facing loneliness.
Ideally, there would be a someone existing nearby.
But now, even something that very ordinary is no longer guaranteed.

And yet... I will be here.
So that you can still be there.
CCX0001

These are the words that Taichi addresses to the reader at the end: *I will be here*. Interpreted in the Meta-VN sense, Taichi is telling readers that he, as the protagonist of a Visual Novel, will be there for them. Not as a person, but as the embodiment of Visual Novels themselves.

He's spurring the readers to communicate with others, to make memories of that, at least; but failing that, the ultimate message is a simple *stay alive*. Stay alive, *and come listen to me again*, specifically.

Because despite this world not being the one in which we belong, the road to that one does not go through suicide; staying alive is of paramount importance until the last day comes, which won't be the last is Christianity is true.

But humans remain prisoners of this unbearable world, and all its violence, pettiness, stupidity, and of course the arrogance of those who believe those things don't apply to themselves just as well. Tolkien, we've seen, claims the Escapism of fiction helps; therefore Tanaka's drive might well be attempting to make Visual Novels help as well.

That would be the message of Cross Channel: dive into Visual Novels if you must, but *stay alive*.

It's interesting to quickly see another story of Tanaka's, Yume Miru Kusuri, on this subject. One of the greatest mysteries in that otherwise *actually* straightforwards story is the identity of the woman who challenges the protagonist in the train.

Through what all we've seen, her identity is very simple to understand: she represents the the *challenge of life* to the protagonist, to do more with himself or otherwise doomed to become a time loop of sorts, a merciless grind that is unlikely to ever end well for him. This reconnects to concepts

like Nanaka, making this mysterious woman possibly a ghost, possibly just Providence personified.

But her looks tell another part of the story. She is a nearly perfect expy of famous Nasuverse character Arcueid Brunestud (and her clothes more than remind of character Len). Her challenge is in fact very much fourth-wall breaking: she represents the VN itself and is *challenging the readers* to do better themselves.

Now, YMK is not targeted at the same audience as Cross Channel, but in sharing many of the meta-aspects while being much simpler, more straightforwards and far more oriented towards the sexual side of things, it is philosophically congruous with it. I consider it a simpler version of Cross Channel in most senses.

The challenge is therefore ablative. Do better with your life; failing that, at least be around someone; failing that, keep your memories close; failing that, play porn games *just don't effing kill yourself*. Christianity and the complexity of the story construction adds significant punch to the message, but in the end, that last one is enough.

Tanaka's fight is an uphill battle. The lives of those who typically consume eroge are typically denoted by a more or less complete rejection of other social interaction, even if this is hypocritical and false of them.

We read to know there's someone out there, reminds Lewis, and without someone out there there's nothing to read. But wanting non-interaction within reading is impossible even on its own face:

The manga is funny.
But if there is something that leaves me dissatisfied, it's in how its subject is so bustling and lively, perhaps.
So many people appear in it.
Right now, that takes just a minute amount of toll.
CCX0001

Those who read still interact with others, at least with the characters which are necessarily, at some level, reflections of the authors themselves; they just take this interaction in a different way. Their problem really begins in the irreconcilable idea that theirs is *not* interaction in any way.

Cross Channel itself, with its message interpretable as it being the author literally having trapped a fragment of his own persona inside discs to communicate with the readers, works to expose this hypocrisy. Even the virtual lives are still lives, in a sense.

Even if their idealization may be stupid, the rejection of 'typical' human interaction still betrays an important aspect of being human: that idea that this life is *wrong*, mistaken, incorrect, inadequate, incomplete. The idea that it's the real world that's wrong, not the fictional one. That is the sense of Escape Tolkien speaks about, and it reconnects to the message itself.

But because it's so easy to fall into contradiction, this Escape may not be virtuous[ccxcvi]; it may lead to delusions of grandeur – who said chuunibyou? – and as much endless despair as the real world would, perhaps more.

But this idea *is* shared and *is* human. When I wrote way at the start of all this that the world supports and encourages Taichi's delusional behavior means this more than anything of the setting proper.

Now, Christianity does offer an answer to this human question: the origin is separation from God, as well as the possibility of closing this gap via submission to no man but to Jesus. It's a message both hopeful and humbling and regardless of its veracity, which remains irrelevant, its usefulness is historically proven.

Societies have grown on the soil of Christianity; it is empirically proven to be sound worldview. Meanwhile, with its birth rate over its suicide rate, Japan (and the post-Christian West) risks doing little more than dying.

On suicide in particular, Tanaka pulls no punches in suggesting that Christianity has the power to stop suicide in Japan, a country with one of

the highest rates of suicide in the world, where train jumpers are all but ordinary things people prefer to simply not discuss:

> You can hear the voice of a ghost, or maybe of a god, from the radio.
> It seems to have the strength to stop the suicides of those who hear.
> **CCE0001**

And in the end, this fulfills the Christian imperative of spreading the gospel to all corners of the world, literally to those who would listen, in allegory and parable to those that don't, so that they themselves would listen and not hear, see but not understand.

If the wind on the rooftop is the deception that keeps humans from hearing each other correctly, then certainly letting it pick up the empty (but was it?) manuscript at the end of the first week is a symbolic act of this.

And if the Christian perspective is true, then stories written from it should resound far deeper in the human heart than those that don't: the ultimate commercial success of Cross Channel, pretty much entirely divorced from widespread deeper understanding, is something that open-minded agnostics should give more than a little thought to.

This concept of Visual Novels possibly helping I dub Visual Novel as Hospice, in honor of Kana: Little Sister that took so much time to examine and explore the use of this strongly Christian (surprise!) institution.

It's for people who suffer and are inevitably going to die; that is, all of mankind.

Itself, the story of Kana: Little Sister changes entirely. For at the end of that one last route, where she leaves the family/mankind to head to an “apartment” out in the world, one day to be perhaps joined by the protagonist who was her brother in Adam and Eve but nothing more, is not her survival in the common sense of the world, but the same survival that Taichi might find should he live thorough to see the sky rot away and fall.

I want to end this more-or-less objective part of the monograph with this quote, for it tells best all that there is here:

One word, Ma'am," he said, coming back from the fire; limping, because of the pain. "One word. All you've been saying is quite right, I shouldn't wonder. I'm a chap who always liked to know the worst and then put the best face I can on it. So I won't deny any of what you said. But there's one more thing to be said, even so. Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things-trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that's a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia. So, thanking you kindly for our supper, if these two gentlemen and the young lady are ready, we're leaving your court at once and setting out in the dark to spend our lives looking for Overland. Not that our lives will be very long, I should think; but that's a small loss if the world's as dull a place as you say.

C.S. Lewis

VIII On Cross Channel: Conclusions

When I see a story that is overly twisting, filled with symbolism, written in really difficult language and that ends in a confusing way with nothing apparently resolved, I have a quick and lethally accurate rule of thumb: I conclude that it's simply pretentious smoke-blowing devoid of any actual depth, written by someone who believes complicated prose isn't a means but the ultimate end, and who has a view of the world no more complex or deep than what can be found in the first half-readable post on your average Internet forum.

Cross Channel is one of those rare creatures that comes once in a blue moon, that actually *does* have depth to match its surface complexity.

Problem is, its depth is nearly impossible to fathom in the first place.

The demands it makes in knowledge and understanding are high to the point of the absurd. Just the level of understanding of the human animal required to make sense of any of this is crazy, doubly so in a world where online interactions seem to consist exclusively of people with social autism masturbating to anyone who dares express any sort of opinion or emotion (itself often worthless, mind).

To keep this thing anywhere near on topic, I had to all but skim over the concept of Man as a rationalizing animal, rather than the common misconception of it being a rational one; humans too often act and then figure out a reason why, and altogether too often they keep doing the same things over and over and over, endlessly spiraling as said.

That's the minimum required level of knowledge, and that's uncommon to find; I chased it for years of my life before finding anything that's sufficiently detailed, predictive and clear. And after *that* there's the Christianity; good luck with that in Japan, if not elsewhere. I wouldn't be surprised if the average person found the explanation every bit as hard as the original text itself.

But even that knowledge alone couldn't solve this.

The way truth is fed as lies that first illuminate other details and then turns back to truth when read through the correct keys feels more like a platform hell game than a deep study. To descend its depths required *extensive* and detailed note-taking: that's what the script commentary started out of.

Honestly if I couldn't open up the script - and were Japanese or otherwise didn't have a translation as a spur to examine every single word in detail - I doubt I would've seen the majority of the depth Cross Channel has to offer, for Tanaka intentionally pulls a lot of stuff over the typical *Japanese* reader as well.

On top of all that, I had to make a good amount of dumb lucky guesses – from the 108/1000 ratio to the sevens and eights to its very Christianity –

that are leaps of logic until the leap is taken and solid ground is found on the other side.

And *all that* only helped *after* figuring out that the story is a puzzle in the first place!

It's clever, it's difficult, it's full of tiny details that were so interesting and exciting to study and analyze, and it's a puzzle I won't ever claim I have solved anything more than 95-ish percent of, what with how I was figuring out little details right up to the publishing of this very monograph; but what if I stopped just at the surface story?

Well, I'm not sure I would've liked it. I consider that surface as the *bland* interpretation for a reason. If I stopped at that, I would have seen little if any reason to conclude Cross Channel is anything but a frustrating and inconclusive mess, with hateable characters, sudden swerves in characterization for no reason (Taichi between normal and Sendback), and no ending at all. Why doesn't he just stay with Youko, the idiot? She's obviously right for him, isn't she? And what the hell is with that final message, "please live", come on, that's weak!

Without understanding all the Biblical meaning, that final message is hard to see as anything but bland, limp and weak. Of course, bland, limp and weak were words that could have been used for the message of this one young man who called himself God, murdered for heresy by the State at the public's uproarious demand nigh on two millenniums ago – yet that tiny little seed grew into a great big oak.

And as long as one person has heard *Channel* in the moment of need...

...but if the surface remains the extent of the interpretation, I can't blame those who believe *Channel* to be almost ridiculously overrated. In fact, I'm sort of puzzled at those that *don't*. Of course, there's how it fakes being Pretentious well enough to impress some of the lesser minds, who will claim they'll like it without understanding a word of it.

To state the problem in a different way: *who is this big huge puzzle targeted to?* Some crazy random guy spending spend six months poring over every bit of this thing, as that's about how long it would take without the year or so it took to translate and compile this very thing?

If the complexity of the puzzle is absurd, the explanation is *itself* excessive; this monograph is relatively synthetic, and while I try to avoid growing too serious for what remains the study of a Japanese porn game that doesn't take itself all that seriously in the first place, it runs at well over 160k words – that's over a third longer I expected it to be before starting. *Including quotes*.

Yet it *did* have success. Of course I can think off the top of my head five VNs that were far more successful than this and couldn't polish its shoes as far as depth and characterization, so there's always the Tediously Pretentious category to consider, but perhaps the message resonated still.

Certainly it has to have resonated more than it would have if it were even more explicitly Christian. Tolkien hated allegory for a reason, and that there is a likely part of it. For some can be told of the mysteries of Heaven, and the rest must be spoken to in parable; so that they will listen and not hear.

In that, with age, Cross Channel has become a devastating satire: the ten years passed without anyone noticing that the great big scientific explanation makes no sense in the terms of the story as well as in actual scientific terms demonstrates how easily people are swayed by simplistic and superficial explanations.

To say nothing of Taichi's own refuge in a pseudo-world himself, ignored by the people outside for twice what I guesstimate to be the amount of time that the people of Gunjou have ignored it, therefore making his behavior plausible in an unlikely and creepily definitive meta sense.

Was it just a coincidence? If so, was it...?

...but that's not something that can be concluded on this side of the Mirror.

It remains that, looking back, I can't help but wonder whether there ever was a point to reading Cross Channel. Not studying, just *reading*. Since so many parts demand an analysis of depth compatible with translation, maybe I should have just started with that and the analysis with it.

It's part of why I haven't read any other Tanaka writings since starting, especially obvious study target Saihate no Ima: it's because I strongly doubt there would be a point in beginning with anything but a close parsing of the language, all the way from the first word.

I certainly found Kana, Family Project (especially!), Yume Miru Kusuri, and even that little bit of Humanity Has Declined as seen in the anime ultimately unsatisfying *as stories* before recognizing the point they had underneath their surface, and which is only really clear (or rather, easiest to clarify) with the reading keys given in Cross Channel, which is likely the most bluntly and openly religious of all. Yes, that's saying something.

In fact, I did glance at the very opening (no more), and what I found further reinforces both this conclusion and my confidence in the quality of the analysis of Cross Channel, as the interpretative keys found here seem to fit the lock of Ima even more neatly than they do for the rest.

A very quick, minutes-long analysis of the opening screen of *Ima* reveals several interesting things: number sevens, an odd Engrish-y tone that appears too futuristic by half, an odd term that may mean “customer number”, but also... I'm wondering if that's a spoiler, actually, much like there's one right in the first line of Cross Channel, so I'm leaving it.

Also a reference to Auguste Villiers de L'isle-Adam , author of *L'Ève future* (the Eve of the Future), which popularized the term Android. Or is it meant to reference Phillip Villiers de L'isle-Adam , grandmaster of the Knights Hospitaller? That name should recall the hospital and the hospice, as the order grew from one of those. Literary reference giving way to a (likely, would need more investigation) religious one, it's so very like Tanaka.

In fact, looking closer, there was no need to go as far as the first screen: it would take very little effort to go from イマ Ima toイブ Ibu, the Biblical

Eve, in the font used for the logo; and the title uses the kanji 果 which has a meaning of *fruit* in itself. Of course it means nothing of the sort as used in the title, but it's not the more complex kanji pun I've seen Tanaka use. And so, it's kind of obvious where this is going.

An “Enemy” then appears, says the storyline synopsis; no need to read much further about this Enemy to smell the sulfur and hear the hooves. Not when the Enemy would disturb the peace of the seven; hello Youko.

Farthest end of a heart, the Fruit, Satan... all without looking so much at the opening scene. And so, I have to wonder if Saihate, as a story, has problems similar to Cross Channel. In fact, since Ima is not considered simple and straightforwards by some of the same idiots that assert Cross Channel is, this may even be *worse*.

Does Ima fall as short of its Lewisian and Tolkenian inspirations in this one important department – pure story – as I must sadly conclude that Cross Channel does? What are its deeper meanings, its intersections, its overlaps, the solutions to the puzzles which are sure to exist within it?

Perhaps one day we will know, perhaps even before this sky has passed and the sea is no more.

Myself, I direct the readers who wish to see more ~~dick jokes, incomprehensible references, translation pedantries, obsolete theories I couldn't be arsed to spot and remove~~ and other stuff to the commented script. I'm out.

i There's also Taichi's sleep cycle to consider, but that will be part of the setting, if indeed not one of the easiest part to make work.

ii As for why she's still in shape, a reminder that her apartment is on the top floor of a building. It all makes sense!

iii This is my adaptation of the term *hard-boiled* when it is written, as Tanaka occasionally does with clear joking intent, with the kanjis for "hard" and "boil". The word is normally simply transliterated into Japanese.

iv And I had to translate the relatively polite Japanese imperative *tamae* consistently just for this one joke, damn it all...

v It's probably more related to the *friction* that these and other actions associated with the kanji cause, but let's not ruin this with boring facts.

vi There's much in Cross Channel that only *looks* like a joke, if it's not clear yet. Think for a moment about Taichi being considered the cause for humanity's disappearance, if only de-facto, and him

launching a human-annihilating bomb. Especially how he calls it a dream, and how he turned into a videogame character for it. Conversely, there's much in Cross Channel that only *looks* serious...

vii Not that Misato didn't run her mouth off with the original sentence, knowing as she undoubtedly does that this is a delicate subject for Taichi.

viii And as seen with that thing about Nanaka, being Japanese native wouldn't necessarily help.

ix He *could* be trolling the readers for the hell of it, but speaking purely personally here, I wouldn't see Cross Channel as being worth studying for this long if that were the case.

x I would suggest considering the concept of Crossing from the viewpoint of a reader and a story right at this moment.

xi By the end of all this, of course, there'll be a good theory.

xii And according to Tomoki with regards to his and Misato's father, this isn't even at the State's complete expense. What happens to those who don't pay tuition is never said, however, and Misato is not removed or in any way affected despite her father obviously being unable to pay it. Maybe "Tomoki misspoke due to the highly stressful situation he was in at the time". (The quotes are to illustrate how that's just a nice way of saying *I'm fanwanking around a likely plot hole, and yes there are some*).

xiii Those who have read it should keep in mind the themes of *evading from the world* and *becoming transparent* ; by the end of this monograph it will be surprising to see how close the two are as pure stories are. In fact, they share the exact same premise and much of the same message.

xiv Compare Combat simply uprooting his chain and leaving. And now how Taichi reacts to Sakuraba, and how Combat reacts to him. The parallel is close.

xv It's probably closer to a cliché itself at this point how madhouse guards can't tell insane people from perfectly healthy ones who've been put in by mistake, or have infiltrated for some test or another... while the insane people can tell immediately. This is similar in Gunjou: it should take paying only a bit of attention to figure out that Taichi is clever enough to abuse the system. This is subtle but further criticism.

xvi As another example of the sometimes excessive detailing that goes in Cross Channel, we're actually hinted at the precise form of molestation that got him a suspension: it was *fishing with a pole*. This is hinted at in the Kiri sex scene.

xvii hee hee

xviii And yet the very first time Miyuki is seen, she'd been shut inside the broadcast room, alone, despite Tomoki being right next room. She escapes back there soon afterwards. This is odd, but no odder than Taichi's behavior as we'll see.

xix My speculation is that the Hasekuras are a mafia family, the head of the main family was arrested, and a branch family took in. It follows a typical pattern of the mafias in that sense: people with honor at least as a fa ç ade being replaced by violent murderous thugs.

xx Nanaka claims Youko was Taichi's first. She could be wrong, of course, but that would only add to the oddities: why the boy and not the girl? She seems to be exceptionally capable with blowjobs, although like with many things with her, perhaps *too* capable.

xxi Kamisaka has the power plant, Gunjou has the State, and the Mansion had the Hasekuras. The Cross World is the same: money may be worthless in there, but all the material possessions of their inhabitants would be left behind for all to plunder, if one wished. And yet Sakuraba, a character that's not the fool he should be, makes Taichi very very wealthy...

xxii And there's much more on the subject of duality! Consider Inner/Outer Kamisaka, the concept of Alter Egos, or, to go a bit into Japanese culture, honne and tatemae . None of these will be straightforwards, of course. Although the inspiration may be indirect, or be just a coincidence, it's worth comparing this to Silent Hill. *Which was real between Foggy Silent Hill and Dark Silent Hill?* The former would be the answer less attentive players would give, but the truth is that they are *both* false, and the real Silent Hill is never really seen in the whole of the series. Coincidence or not, keep that in mind.

xxiii Compare the descriptions of her room in the Mansion with that of her apartment in Kamisaka: they are virtually identical. There's no escape from a prison of one's own devise.

xxiv The total number, a mere double of the Broadcast Club, is also suspect. Even assuming the servitude had all quit or run away, 14 people is really really low for a mansion that size. No witnesses, from what was said, so they couldn't have been just the masterminds.

xxv He can decide *with his eyes* who is or isn't in this Cross World. Obvious enough now?

xxvi Curiously, there's hedgehogs involved, which is sort on theme; but it's Sonic, and not the dilemma.

xxvii And not criticize, because, well, the main point is how Sakuraba...

xxviii Consider an animal's sensitivity to flickering light and Taichi's professed love for candlelight. Why, it's enough to make him nearly lose his memory of having just been singed!

xxix Which are, paradoxically, precisely the kind of people who would be quickest to believe this pile of fetid compost. The mockery of that sort *is only just beginning*.

xxx I know it's " ruby text ", but you can't make furry jokes out of that, therefore the correct word is now and forever furrygana and if you don't like then UR DUM.

xxxi As well as reeking of anthropomorphizing, something that happens with surprising frequency in Cross Channel.

xxxii Futanari are intrinsically funny.

xxxiii There are many reasons to believe Another Story to be canon, but not in this World B sense.

xxxiv As unlikely as it sounds... unless he had it in third year of middle grade, then Misato's also a possibility, but that would make the time reference wonky even considering how Taichi doesn't quite seem to remember things right. As of that Yusa scene, Taichi wouldn't have been one year out of middle grade.

xxxv In fact, his alarm clock is never heard after the first week, where he wakes him up from his first encounter with Nanaka, the one explicitly shown to be a dream. Interesting how the first week would be *more* honest than some later ones, isn't it.

xxxvi Curiously, in the Kiri Sendback route he tells her to wake him up at six. On Sunday!

xxxvii That little dialogue is one of the most quoted scenes of the entire VN, oddly enough. Count the number of times "my body, you caaan't!" and "have mercy!" come up. This further hints that the Sakakibara writing was inspired by something else, as the Touko scene most likely was. Plus, it makes no sense on its face: why would Taichi be imagining forcing himself on a girl he found so invasive and annoying that he dumped, an act that ended really really badly as well?

xxxviii A reminder to those who don't quite understand this but think they do: there are no scientific tests, repeated or repeatable or even *made*, that prove the existence of multiple worlds; hence the term *interpretation*. Some scientists and scientist-wannabe may agree that MWI is "credible" or "real", but that does not make it science.

xxxix "Dialogue" as in Youko talks, Taichi nods and doesn't get a word of it. It's very telling of their relationship.

xl The original script file was split due to technical thingamajigs that don't really matter, but suffice to say that after delving for eight plus months in the technical guts of Cross Channel I have less than complete respect for the scripting and QC team at FlyingShine. Not that the PS2 and 360 versions are much better, especially when it comes to bug testing. And how the hell did they manage to make the 360 version look like it's been smeared on the screen when the original files are 1280x960, which are larger than even the Reprint edition's?!

xli How many did take that as a serious bit of philosophizing that Taichi just happens to make understandable typos with, instead of being a straight-up comedy scene? I'd rather not ask, but I fear I know the answer. Oh, the text itself *of course* has a very profound meaning, but like with everything Taichi says that makes sense, it's clear only under deeper and lateral analysis. What he literally wrote is nonsensical. And these errors are part of the reading key.

xlii Though I would like to note for the education of *certain someones* that it does **not** entail adding more possibilities to the box.

xliii This will be confirmed in many more ways, too. It's very possible that the only character who understands Taichi worse than he himself does is Youko. In fact, she might be the single most clueless character in the entirety of the story.

xliv As with it all being due to Taichi's eyes, this is another of those things that makes it all obvious in retrospect.

xlv The note found in the hokora telling Taichi to put his records in them was stated to be found in an otherwise empty hokora. It's possible Taichi put a diary and Youko removed it due to it being a 'bad ending', as she says she does in CCD0021, but that's quite the chicken-and-egg thing, isn't it? The odds Taichi would find it with Nanaka pointing it out are low as it is, but without hints *at all*?

xlvi To the explanation of why this nonsense explanation actually makes perfect sense, if you just have the correct reading keys. And no peeking ahead to that obviously labeled chapter, fool! You are yet to *see* said reading keys!

xlvii Without entering into irrelevant Superman vs. Batman-level pseudo-polemics of the "well if everything is possible then there's a creature somewhere that has destroyed the whole of the multiverse therefore we can't exist" kind, I would stress that what is "possible" is still left conspicuously vague in MWI.

xlviii Considering this is Nanaka i.e. Taichi's memories talking, this error shouldn't be surprising. Another interesting quote: "Mom was a youthful prisoner of fear, so she did not possess knowledge." in script **CCX0001**: this comes right before the eyes troll...

xlix At the cost of going into Modest Proposal territory, I have to wonder if it isn't about time we forced supporters of MWI to try out that quantum suicide machine or shut up about the whole thing.

l Whether this contempt is intentional or not, however...

li And speaking of which: can we *really* exclude contact lenses for Taichi's eyes? Perhaps *too* prescient.

lii In other words, I may be using the two interchangably and/or erroneously, and that's because neither I nor anybody else actually cares.

liii Taichi grows bad, Miki smacks him, Taichi forgets, Miki installs a new concept in him. This should sound familiar. But Another Story has only the first two... has it?

liv Or are they? The sound of the cicadas in Week 1 is different and much more subdued from the one in every flashback, with one exception which I suspect is a bug. Might just be an attempt to reduce the attention readers would pay to it, however.

lv More important when considering what does *not* do that: Yutaka's death itself, which Kiri witnessed.

lvi The third time is in a very heavy-handed joke about Japan's public TV. The NHK is rape!

lvii If you know what I mean. And I mean it's another utterly ridiculous thing allowed by the school. For once.

lviii This is naturally VERY VERY IMPORTANT.

lix In fact, let's do the math! First time it's Thursday in the morning, let's say around 8, hour 104 of the week: that's 11:15 of the real day, about an hour before peak time. Second time, in the third week, it's noon Monday which would put in the dead of night, however. Not easy to make these work, as said.

lx Literally: in the Miki and Kiri routes he can be found in the infirmary with a stomachache, and later on he can beg food from Taichi for the same reason. Yes, this is important.

lxi For example, that thing about all the classrooms being the same, seen earlier; another example is the entirety of the VN.

lxii Oddly enough not necessarily of Visual Novels, but that side will be easier to explore in the facts rather than in his rants. Which still sound like obvious authorial filibusters at times.

lxiii Curiously, not the one thing PS2 is most known for: having one of the first on-screen permanent party deaths. At least Tanaka didn't use the lengthy mazey dungeons filled with tough random encounters...

lxiv His first meeting with Nanaka in week 1 is explicitly a dream, for example. Then again, since Nanaka is his theoretically forgotten mother, *not being a flashback* may not mean much in this context.

lxv I think it's a parody of Sinistar, but it's hard to tell.

lxvi Leading to the question of whether it was actually Youko looking at him that triggered his breakdown at all.

lxvii Yes, with a Z. Explanation for later™.

lxviii These read like an older Karate instructor's explanations. The only alternative was leaving them flat, really.

lxix It's never stated explicitly, but the simplest reason would be that she's forbidden from receiving martial arts training due to her status as Dangerous Person. But she can still carry the sword around freely, which is why she doesn't for most of the story and summons it at odd and convenient moments in physically impossible ways.

lxx He's right, by the way. The problem is what coincidence *is*.

lxxi This warmth is interesting seeing how flashbacks are sepia, which makes the world very similar in color to sunset. All share the strong *red* in them, as with blood.

lxxii It still is. Consider the possibility it's a meta-joke: there is *no* doll with Sakuraba brown-haired. Of course he originally wasn't seen in that scene, but that changed in the console version. He has no swimsuit doll in the base game, either, only in the Xbox 360 version and it's still not seen in the main scenario: was it a case of *budget writes the plot?* If so, watch how easily both of those things are made to fit into the story. Oh, Sakuraba being invincible is a plot point, very much so.

lxxiii The Japanese for this line reads so much like it was fed through a machine translator I was seriously tempted to do the same in reverse.

lxxiv As far as I can tell, she's using temporary cache to erroneously refer to Windows instead of the web browser. Maybe simplified because “Internet Explorer” would need to be censored anyway, maybe it's just more Taichi having no clue about all that stuff; Nanaka died well before the Internet era anyway.

lxxv ...and yet, no split personality of Taichi's is ever seen, except for these oddities where Taichi still seems to be entirely in control, and very very rare moments where he just goes mad and kills everyone...

lxxvi This will return when discussing Cross Channel as a Meta Visual Novel.

lxxvii Why is he even starving in that scene?! Seems odd Youko would leave him without dinner just for messing about with Touko a bit. And he could definitely plunder Tasaki for something.

lxxviii Touko may have a refined nose, but it's sort of odd she managed to smell Taichi roasting potatoes all the way up in her mansion on the other side of town, and be there before he finishes eating. She might just be lying; wouldn't be the first time she does so on food related matters.

lxxix Taichi randomly blurts out really ugly moe words like this – just like Nanaka does. It's a sweet imitation of his own mother in retrospect.

lxxx With once more the reminder that the two aren't even mutually exclusive.

lxxxi An oddity is that, in the Kiri route, he never recognizes his diaries by handwriting, but by *writing style*. The Youko route is right after the Miki route and the Sakakibara diary, which is not written in his style, but also not recognized in any way: although I'm far from certain this could be the point.

lxxxii Just another example where being native could hinder rather than help.

lxxxiii And since Taichi likely never ever saw her even *on* a bike, that means her skills are entirely Nanaka's own boasting to baby Taichi. If that seems odd, remember her wearing buruma must also be this.

lxxxiv There's also the possibility she meant that he's on his Summer Break *now* , and that the whole thing about the longer vacation at Gunjou that the publicity talks about actually lasts through the story itself, but this theory is sort of half-baked at best, so I haven't explored it much.

lxxxv Which are definitely exacerbated by his sitting close to a monitor and playing videogames for years, by the by.

lxxxvi The original furrymtngana™ is in Western characters, and the text is Al***e***tered State***s*** (sic). It's not only a typo so clumsy no one with access to the Internet could plausibly make it, the text as mangled text is exactly 7x2=14 letters. This weird ruby text suggests troll, as seen in the scientific examination, and the number even more so as we'll see.

lxxxvii We'll see more on Tomoki's response, but it's also interesting and immediately relevant as it involves *Taichi not observing certain kinds of people*. It's pretty blatant when read from this point.

lxxxviii Another nice example of this comes in Yume Miru Kusuri. The protagonist has audio/visual hallucinations of a train, which he sees when alone in his rejection of others due to his difficult backstory (**hint hint does this remind you of anything**). This train represents his life growing more and more Fixed, as the image of the train will overtake everything if he doesn't get off at one of the three stations presented to him in his life.

lxxxix Do note that Yusa, with this, has refused to answer the question.

xc To stay on the topic, can Shiki (any) kill a Servant? The correct answer is "depends on what Kinoko Nasu says today", but the problem is *fighting* them, not *killing* them, and since humans that can fight them exist, then the answer is *do you get what I'm saying yet?*

xci And all, curiously, leading up not to mass murder, but *suicide*.

xcii Misato never using Taichi's nickname would imply that it wasn't established yet, despite her having known him for a year to a year and a half at that point; that would make the suspension incident (which I *guess* is what triggered her trying for a nickname different than “suspension-kun”), but the nickname scene appears a lot earlier in their relationship. Did anyone in the club *actually* get along, or was it all in Taichi's mind? Oh, and don't forget Touko: it's nearly impossible to tell at what stage of their relationship they are; she seems to dislike him, but not so much that it's recently post-breakup, nor is her dislike jealousy-based as it should be shortly before the breakup.

xciii hi mom

xciv You're reading

xcv these five

xcvi all in a

xcvii single batch

xcviii I hope

xcix This may just be a corner cut, much like how the majority of the ending of Week 2 is shared by both the Misato and Touko routes, which makes little sense whichever character was captured, but particularly in Touko's case. Not all plot holes are invisible, and not all plausibly budget-cutting measures are well covered, unfortunately.

c The scene takes place on Thursday night, which would put this to around 1PM. That also explains why Kiri's going at that moment: she's practicing after lunch break.

ci But not why she didn't go kill Kiri or, if she did, why she didn't actually do the deed with no Taichi to stop her.

cii And we even hear the bell... in a sense.

ciii The Miki House cardboard box was used by Miki to at least to obtain pictures of Kiri stripping and checking for leakage, which is what she holds over her to get her to a double date in her route. Taichi can later do the same and see the event for himself. This is clearly a homage to Metal Gear, in particular Metal Gear Solid: it was released in Japan September 3 1998, not four days before. Barring those borderline meta exceptions it's the single most recent reference in the story, which is

interesting considering the sheer number of them. And you were expecting a link to the Disney website, weren't you?

civ It could be a hint things aren't as they should be. But just because it's easy to hypothesize doesn't make it any less likely to be fanwanking.

cv The terminology surrounding the antenna is always surprisingly vague. It may just be more of Taichi's ignorance on the specifics, but Misato referring to that giant cellphone tower-sized antenna as having a mere 20W of power seems just poor research. Regardless, it's ultimately irrelevant except for this one oddity.

cvi She got "84%" Kurosu Taichi to formally join. Council President Misuki, erm, *Mi***z**uki Kiri*miya* from Yume Miru Kusuri builds on this part of her character even more.

cvii Wikipedia reports a "late July to early September", which fits with it being from July 20th to the first full week of September, as it was in 1998 where September started on a Tuesday. This is also consistent with CCA0003, which claims vacation is a "month and a half". The only problem is that the story, and the advertising material most importantly, claim the Summer Vacation in Gunjou is *longer* than that of traditional institutes. I simply don't have an explanation for this except that half-theory about the story taking place while it's *still* summer vacation.

cviii No weight is actually given, not even in the materials book. Well, a gender confused boy has to have his? secrets.

cix He confuses it for Windows 98, which would've been released just the previous July in Japan.

cx And it's not an euphemism for sex or sexual organs, though the superficial troll is that Tomoki, the PC guy, actually doesn't know much about PCs. Sort of how Miki has too much boob to be a true loli.

cxi I still can't believe I've actually used a website that left credit card information saved in AutoComplete *in 2011*. Wow. This reminds me of that time when [20k word irrelevant moved to script commentary]

cxii As even more semi-random but relevant examples, there's absolutely nothing strange in Japanese in saying that electrical appliances "aren't usable" or the media "doesn't convey" if intending that there's no electricity and no one to actually provide media. Except, if the Settei theory is correct, these meanings become extremely literal: the usage of appliances becomes a choice, and the media not "conveying" becomes media criticism. The secret is hidden in plain sight, as typical of Cross Channel's idea that lies are all for a greater truth. Yume Miru Kusuri provides a similar example of media that “doesn't convey”: whenever it's time to communicate via cellphone or mail, in that story, for one reason or another it never quite works as expected, if at all.

cxiii Although in that Miki scene Taichi uses “FS/SF Phenomenon”, meaning this would be the Shimura Phenomenon Phenomenon. I blame it on having to replace the first Phenomenon with katakana (*fenomenon*) and the second being in kanji (*genshou*). Also madness, and Taichi not knowing English. Oh, and Japan. Can't forget Japan.

cxiv Misato's lengthy explanations that put people to sleep seem not to have made it to the final text; the only time she starts rambling is when she's drunk.

cxv It's particularly funny when considering this is what *female* characters usually have.

cxvi Which were reimplemented in the translation patch. Porn is Very Important.

cxvii Kiri's hair is also oddly blue-ish, and curiously, sketches of Touko with much more animesque hair exist in the Materials Book.

cxviii The characterization similarities with Yume Miru Kusuri's Council President Mizuki hint that she has some dirt on the high-ranking people of Gunjou. Considering that the Headmaster has a Ferrari (on a public school salary?), and of three teachers we hear of one may engage in torture, one may be wearing wholly inappropriate clothing for this kind of institute, and one may be well be living off in his own world - Taichi's descriptions are of course less than completely reliable - then this isn't difficult to imagine.

cxix Which is how it had to be written in the patch as the engine doesn't support kanji display.

cxx For example, this otherwise unrelated website is named 美美美, which is very much the same name (the 'kanji repetition' is more for aesthetics, as it doesn't really alter the pronunciation), has its URL as vi-vi-vi.

cxxi To work around this creeping up in the translation, I simply had the engine read the actual scripts from the first week. This causes save file to incorrectly state the current chapter, but that's a minor price to pay to avoid having to deal with *thousands* of pointlessly copy-pasted lines.

cxxii The author's message of Another Story appears to hint that Mimimi has its payoff in that scenario, but even on a quick reading it's obviously not the case: Taichi is simply calling her Mimimi when he “fixes” her character by making her his younger sister. That's not even a payoff, let alone an explanation for *why* Misato hates it.

cxxiii How much of this is design error, and how much of this is Romeo Tanaka keeping parts of the story concealed even from the rest of the design team, is something impossible to tell.

cxxiv The single line after the choice used to be the same for all three, but the console versions make a slightly alteration to it. Nothing else changes, so the choice remains false.

cxxv IT'S NOT HER BOOBS DAMMIT

cxxvi In ADV mode. It wasn't even completely clear that it was intended as a single sentence, it was written in a way that was easily readable as being three sentences that break off randomly, as if Taichi were starting a thought and then cutting it off partway, hesitating. Only when assembled back it's obvious that it's a single sentence clumsily cut. Here it's restored in all its run-on beauty, and it's not the only one. Sometimes I wonder what the people at FlyingShine were thinking.

cxxvii ...although there's some wrestler talk later on that for *mysterious reasons* became an Ultimate Warrior reference (or rather a reference to an Ultimate Warrior reference - it's not only timeline appropriate, but it's amazing how the lines themselves fit with nearly no change), and Touko is quite a bit related to dangerous weight loss. It's not immediately obvious, but it's still within relevance.

cxxviii Unfortunately, whether censorship or the vagaries of design, the poses are nowhere near close enough to pho--- you know what I'm not gonna finish that sentence. I'll instead snicker childishly at the use of "seminal" to refer to a nude photobook.

cxxix And that's why she conflates him with an idol. Badum-tish!

cxxx I know this needs a footnote, but I don't actually have words.

cxxxi Baseball is life and the little brother is Yutaka, although the guy wasn't dead when Misato approached him, he didn't know at the point of his life this represents and he's back-projecting his regret. Or perhaps, he regretted killing Yutaka all along, making his later behavior even more devastating.

cxxxii The term is actually ambiguous enough that it *could* support him being talking about Misato, or everyone there, but the topic in that part of the scene was Taichi, and discussion about Misato comes afterwards. At the very least it's implied he *wants* to dislike Taichi.

cxxxiii This sounds random until remembering that there's someone who assembles scale models: Sakakibara. A very strange, but also apt comparison. It's certainly not an unimportant question to wonder how far in his own world Sakakibara actually is.

cxxxiv ...although that early scene in Youko's route, the one where Taichi and Tomoki really don't get along, it is implied that Tomoki is simply out of Taichi's league. But characters grow as time goes on, we've already seen Misato has and Tomoki won't be the last.

cxxxv Is it a running gag already...?

cxxxvi Furendo-kun is not to be confused with Tomodachi-san who came over to, player kawaii kingdom harts and narUhto with imoto-san.

cxxxvii There's actually a minor metaproblem in one scene, however, where Taichi declares himself 17 and Miki 15. That's because the bit is taken from the console versions, which replace a really dull and unfunny scene with that one, which *needs* to reintegrated for reasons hopefully obvious. As the console versions are for all ages, and not eroge, there's no need for the characters to have

artificially inflated ages. This ultimately changes nothing, however: Tomoki suspiciously never says his age, although claiming he's under 20 years old in all versions is odd, as he should be 21 in eroge years at least; Taichi thinking he's 17 is part of his 98 Game, and Miki is necessarily lying as this scene takes place in her route, and cannot be 15 by the very rules of the story. In fact, since her birthday would have to be past September in order for her to be 15 at all, her statement is suspect regardless.

cxxxviii Is anyone surprised that an apparently irrelevant little side joke has a metaphorical meaning? Really?

cxxxix Remember the one thing that the fairies (you-sei) in Jintai were incapable of making? Hold to that thought for when we get to You-ko.

cxl Which I remind having been an all-girls' school. I could link to this , but "hubba hubba" seems more appropriate.

cxli With a further oddity regarding the caviar: she says the one for the week before was untouched and so she threw it away. But if the week before she was at training camp, that would mean *her family* didn't touch it either. Harder to say why none would be delivered, unfortunately, but if no one's eating it, what's the point of even ordering any?

cxlii Which is madness, considering the only access is a train and the expanse of the Kirihara estate.

cxliii In anderes worte, Taichi's lofe fur die aloov frauleinen ist vrom zis 'ere affekzion fur hiz zelf-reliant und zhunned mozher.

cxliv Curiously, the scripts and the voice files call her Fuyuko, all the way to the new lines exclusive to the Xbox 360 version. There's exactly two voiced lines in the whole main scenario (and included extras) where Touko's name is pronounced, and oddly enough it's both Miki at the end of her route.

cxlv And Misato alone in her flight, and Kiri fighting alone against the world, and Yusa the lonely bullied one ~~, and Sakuraba because he lives off in his own world and let's face it Taichi protests too much~~ .

cxlvi ...and yet in her route he'll have a fit on how her lunchboxes were made by a maid which then made them look like she made them without her aid. More likely it was just because of the age. Even gerentophilia has its limits, I guess

cxlvii And that was the last that thread was ever heard of. ~THE FIN~

cxlviii Making that silly diary scene early in the first week make a very different kind of sense, if taking as unlikely that Taichi would imagine raping a girl he rejected for being too possessive and too sexually disinhibited for purposes of further possessiveness. That little vignette itself is one of the most ambiguous parts of Cross Channel, as well, the seriousness of its intent change multiple times according to the reader's viewpoint of Taichi. I believe the force feeding to be the deepest reading, however, whether Taichi is aware of it or not.

cxlix And keep in mind that for this to have happened, Miki must have seen the body first, and only called Kiri over after she had done this.

cl And wait until it involves witches for the obvious jokes. Remember how the patch requires Python installed?

cli Touko seems the kind that would resist at Tomoki trying to put his cucumber in her mouth. Not that Tomoki has any cucumbers except for Taichi, outside the ones Taichi shares with Sakuraba as they rummage in Tomoki's box.

clii Thus explaining the Recollections screen on the main menu. ...except that Taichi describes his memory as movie-like, so him needing a camera for this seems more than a little odd. Unless his memories are movie-like because he just records the damn thing.

cliii Surprisingly enough, I couldn't find a single videos of anyone attempting this. And I googled that. The things I do for my art...

cliv As for me, she wears ve-ve-ve-veEeRtical stripes which are doubleplusheresy ungoodsin against all that is stripe, and therefore I hate her forever and ever. The End. Also hate hate hate that stupid

Taichi who thinks those are Real™ stripes when they're obviously not. The End (bis).

clv Well, she has *something* stuck up her ass, and that crossbow *is* ass-pulled at time, so, uhm, Hammerspace is up her ass but there's no anal sex ah wait she gets a thumb up her ass and and and and I lost track of where I was going here, but I'm sure it was funny and/or disgusting. Ah well.

clvi The subtle irony of the Classic Tsundere calling the protagonist an *insect* in these circumstances should not be lost.

clvii Remember the end of the part about Tomoki, with the bomb? Always interesting to follow specific terms here.

clviii Even funnier in the console version, where he asks questions like "which conditioner do you use". She and Taichi apparently use the same, which is actually interesting remembering their natural hair looks like a very similar blue.

clix Given the parallels, I wonder if that girl in Kana: Little Sister was actually intended to be read as somewhat creepy.

clx For all Miki's worries that Youko's death would make Taichi go mad, the only one who does is Kiri. That is, unless Taichi going mad means nothing of what it seems.

clxi I'm not excluding writing issues on this, but as we'll see later, Youko throwing stones with a slingshot at glass ~~houses~~ may not mean the obvious.

clxii Interesting he thinks *she* is the unreliable one, but this point is not expanded on particularly. It could be he's speaking of how he knows her Ultramarine, but there's no further details.

clxiii Curiously, that's Burvixese for "we'll see more in the coming chapters", or at least that's what Google Translate tells me.

clxiv A side note on this cat dialogue. Modern Japan has made significant advances in the discipline of Thought Experiment Comprehension Failure (TECF), which have determined that the proper place for cats is inside of boxes. This is proven due to the fact of Quantum Science and euphemisms for excrements (such as "excrement"). The most modern scientific breakthroughs in the field of TECF have made it possible to engineer ways for cats to exist in superstates *without* any need for poison in the box, as the Deus Ex Chaos scene aptly demonstrates. Therefore, it is not I, but rather the very concept of Science that determines the position of this father cat would be, as said, inside of a box. QED(?).

clxv He cries multiple times through the story, seriously and less so. He often implies being unable to cry at all, but his being unable to cry *for Yutaka alone* makes much more sense.

clxvi I'm thankful. Otherwise you know I would've ended up buying it. *looks at his six separate copies of Cross Channel and sighs*

clxvii Another detail that *conveniently* stays more or less consistent across time, meaning it can become Fixed.

clxviii The first is symbolized by a cross, or dagger; the second is used by Youko to cast stones at glass, as mentioned; the third is seen generating a rainbow in the finale; the last has the very word cross in it. Seeing the pattern?

clxix Perhaps she hoped to use the traps there? Hmmm, an elaborate series of traps built halfway up a mountain by a blonde loli... *sound familiar?*

clxx Considering the Touko thing, and the time compression, it may just be neither she nor Taichi leave the school grounds and he just sees it as night, but it's difficult enough to show how the story can work with everyone still there without trying to fit every behavior within the time compression and the school schedule. I'm not even sure it can be done at all.

clxxi And that goes straight into the top ten of "things I never expected to write in my life".

clxxii Although I question Tanaka's use of this term and Alter Egos as functional synonyms, it needs to be reminded that Alter Egos *cannot* be successful. It's among the basic themes of the story that people will try regardless, but success is simply not possible.

clxxiii There's a joke in there about forum trolls, but then I would have to bring in the fifth episode of *that thing*, AKA “Internet Flame War: The VN” and we're already over space and out of topic as it

is.

clxxiv No longer having the silly music from continuing across that scene helps, too.

clxxv Curiously, both 'big no's and 'I got a bad feeling about this' appear in Cross Channel, and I suspect intentionality on the latter. Also: he wears a mask that makes him look and sound obviously evil in order not to be seen as what he is. Is it clear now? How about now???

clxxvi I'm surprised she never built a robot clone of Kiri. ...wait a second, *that would actually explain everything!*

clxxvii What I like to call the "*he's a LARPer, burn the witch*" interpretation of Cross Channel.

clxxviii aI will never concede it! Hear me? NEVEEEEEEEER!!! *curses the sky, vows revenge on all that is good and pure, proceeds on a random murder spree where he strangles people with a literal red string*

clxxix Ryukishi07 himself asserted that he took Cross Channel as heavy inspiration for later Higurashi and Umineko, but having read them later than a good chunk of my study of Cross Channel, it surprised even me how *literally* that was meant. That quote at the start of the book should recall something of Umineko, and I warn you: that's not just me trying to be clever. That Ryukishi07 spent much of his VN writing career all but screaming some of the major interpretative keys of Cross Channel *to no one putting two and two together* is among the most bizarre things I must conclude in my analysis of Cross Channel.

clxxx What's that face? This *is* an eroge, dammit.

clxxxi Oddly enough, this implies that Taichi doesn't know where Miki lives, despite stating it clearly back in the very first visit to Tasaki in the first week. Maybe plot hole, or maybe they're playing around - he will define her apartment block as "ruins" in her Sendback.

clxxxii And how damn obvious was that lie?!

clxxxiii Kiri and Misato are very visible; the one on the left has trousers, so it's either Sakuraba or Tomoki; hand in the lower left must belong to someone not onscreen due to position, and looks male; Youko is onscreen; Taichi's the POV; Touko has a distinct dress and shoes, and provided she isn't that hand on the left, isn't onscreen at all. Therefore, the last pair of female legs on the right can only be Miki's. It's *possible* for either Tomoki, Sakuraba or Touko to not be dead in that screen, but not Miki.

clxxxiv ...to be fair, only "peke-kun" is ever defined as being for anybody's exclusive use, but it's not an odd extrapolation that the complementary would also be true. Even odder that she'll call Touko as *Touko-senpai* in the big rooftop expository talk, still Mimi-senpai for Misato, but Tomoki she calls *Shima-senpai*. Pretty odd.

clxxxv Those who've read Umineko should, at this point, have no doubt left regarding the inspiration for the Witches' Game. Youko Route Miki and early Episode 6 Beatrice are as one. However, while Miki will never take the Game up again, it's an important part of the story of Umineko that Beatrice does: and there begin the significant philosophical differences between the two.

clxxxvi Since Miki is not a straightforwards Villain it's not as dramatic, but her fight post-credits is pretty much this trope in action.

clxxxvii You read that with an 'a', didn't you. Pervert.

clxxxviii The interview in the Materials Book has a different opinion, but as we'll see when examining Tower of Friends carefully, Tanaka is stretching that truth more than a little. Let's say that it's true – for a *simplistic* interpretation of things. Even at the 98 Game level, however, no such luck.

clxxxix Which then came to life and began being all passive-aggressive to Taichi, but only in the Kurosu Expansion pack. I'd say I'm kidding, but honestly, given all the anthropomorphizing that goes on in Cross Channel...

cxc Let's say you can't really leave the town except through the portal at the hokora. And only one person allows you to do that.

cxci He builds a communication tower that would need to be powerful enough to reach an unclear "other side", and the consequence is that no one understands each other's language anymore. Miki destroys the tower and gets brutally killed in return, and not three days later the cold tomb of Gunjou with its open gate is found empty. Once you see, it can't be unseen.

cxcii The character tag was removed from the Xbox 360 version as it's voiced, and it's now obvious who it should be. The original materials book version also says it's Misato, so this isn't in question.

cxciii Remember when he repeats "dialogue!" like a zombie (self-described) in order to make a monstrous conversation, or rather, a monster of conversation?

cxciv The joke sort of fits, but it's not quite right: after all, if a sandwich is eaten between a witch (Miki) and sand (pulverized glass i.e. Kiri), then it would actually be a Taichi sandwich. However, to my knowledge those have never been memes in Japan; then again, “you killed Kenny! You bastards!” was a meme in Carnival Phantasm, so anything is possible I guess.

cxcv SUPRISE TWIST!

cxcvi No *actual* specifics on whose, and as all too often happens, this may actually not refer to his. Kiri having calmed, for example, would fit; but let's leave that as reaching. It is little more than that, after all.

cxcvii This would also work to fix another nice troll that's staring right in the face of anyone trying to take the *first* scene with Miki explaining literally: Kiri's body, shot fatally by Miki and strangled by Taichi, is lying right on the ground as Miki talks about coincidence being the great killer. Given Taichi's backstory, he totally has some knowledge of how to make people pass out with his hands (think *erotic asphyxiation* , if you must), as that's how Youko makes him pass out in her Sendback route. And that's why she's out of the game as of that moment: she's also sleeping.

cxcviii That last part was commented out and left only as instructions for the voice actor, but that's *obviously* an error.

cxcix While it does serve as a frame to introduce a good portion of the world of Kamisaka, the relevance of *that* is going to be difficult for all but the most attentive readers to see as well. Almost all of it plays in much deeper layers than even the one being discussed for most of this monograph. I personally can't fault any reader who finds himself puzzled and bored at this infodump of apparent irrelevancies right at the start.

cc And speaking of people who should've listened to Taichi about whether lolicon is a disease...

cci Although bringing a gift when coming to visit is common practice in Japan, that's typically handed straight off and with a specific ceremonial phrase. Yusa instead calls it explicitly a *birthday* gift.

ccii Unless it's pluraEW EW EW NOOO BRAIN BLEACH BRAIN BLEEEACH!!!

cciii I didn't say of *what book* though! Mwahahahahah!

cciv Does someone more broken than immediately apparent taking a jokey marriage proposal too seriously with dire consequences remind of anything?

ccv In fact, it may have involved nothing else (dot dot dot).

ccvi It was the bathroom scene that truly got Kiri to stop caring for Youko's threats, just like the forced kiss on the rooftop caused Kiri to think Taichi as Yutaka's killer rather than seeing him at the scene. But was that one thing enough to make her want to throw away her life...?

ccvii Adding a new line right before we first see Youko where the focus is on a *bungee* cord (with Bungie being transliterated in Japanese identically as bungee), having Miki use the same term for Taichi going insane as used in Marathon for AIs going insane, not to mention Misato referring to Taichi as a robot when in his 'weird state' are certainly doing nothing to allay suspicion, however. And let's not go into that whole Hero thing, or how basically both Cross Channel and Marathon Infinity end at the end of the Universe...

ccviii Three and ten also recur, and there's its share of them in Cross Channel but as we'll see soon, those are not as important here.

ccix WE GOT ADVANCED MATH HERE PEOPLE I HOPE YOU CAN KEEP UP.
ccx Also a Z with stroke , but that's a fairly typical styling. The pronunciation symbol for that, however, looks very similar to the Japanese syllable ru (ろ).
ccxi You do not know tedium until you've translated a 800 line scene of Japanese porn. You do not know *madness* until you realize that yes, you have to count every single damn moan because of this. If it helps, most of the sex scenes in Cross Channel read silly enough that I believe Tanaka himself was bored stiff when writing them.
ccxii hee hee snort
ccxiii **NOW** it's the boobs.
ccxiv Also Heisei 9 and 10, but those seem unrelated. That it's only Western years that are of relevance may be an important hint...
ccxv Most dictionaries don't report psst as a verb, but who're you gonna trust, me or those Oxford creeps? They use 'crisp' to mean chips, that's just suspicious.
ccxvi I, of course, reject this being even physically possible.
ccxvii Metaphors may be mixed due to :effort:
ccxviii 8 is Yu. It's translingual, but, hmmm...
ccxix And the rest of the world, according to anime, but I've searched my house multiple times and I can't find this room that has a noren with ゆ yu on it.
ccxx
ccxxi Cold Wintry Wind. Touko is written Winter Child, and also has a Favored Sword.
ccxxii That's a more literal reading of 神出鬼没which I generally translated as *elusive phantom*.
ccxxiii He will claim to detect Misato in her house at the end of her Sendback. Naturally, I have little reason to trust this, if only because it reads like a further refinement of his ability to see motion (see Youko on the water tower at the end of Week 1).
ccxxiv The conclusion is that Cross Channel is against videogaming in general and has nothing to do with poor or missing parenting. *Very Important Note: the previous sentence was sarcasm.*
ccxxv Or is it? Misato can't fit into the previous year's swimsuit due to what Taichi believes to be an increase in breast size, except he seems to say so as half-joke; yet he has swimsuits that fit her. I don't think there's anything but a minor plot hole, though it's interesting she uses one that looks pretty damn "comfy" from that point of view. I wonder if that was actually the only one that fit her...
ccxxvi I WONDER WHAT THE EXTRA LITTLE 'BIT' ON THE BOTTOM PART OF TAICHI'S FIRST KANJI COULD REPRESENT.
ccxxvii Three or more? Forget it. This split personality of Taichi's is the lest realistic part of him. But there's far more allegorical and perhaps even supernatural things at work here.
ccxxviii It's not like I disagree; indeed, an infirmary without a nurse with big boobs and glasses is like a Visual Novel without futanari, tentacle rape or loli: it would not be worth even looking at. Fortunately, none exist to my knowledge.
ccxxix This would probably work better with Kanji display.
ccxxx The reference is unfortunately difficult to source, but one guy dressed up as a girl *does* turn up. It's too new for that one to be a reference (it's from Gintama), but I wonder if that shares roots with this.
ccxxxi Yet it's nowhere near as definite that they heard the sex scene, despite Kiri being halfway through a window for most of it and shouting that she was about to fall multiple times. They should've been a lot louder than a bomb!
ccxxxii Yes, Youko jails his penis while Miki frees it the most.
ccxxxiii For example: out with the mother means in with the wife, Hitchcock style [cue train in the gallery]. In short, he totally fell for Miki at that point as well.
ccxxxiv It's a kind of Japanese grammar-ish thing you either know about or are extraordinarily unlikely to care to know. Suffice to say it involves remove 'ra' in a verb form, and since Taichi's

madness in Another Story had him go 'ra ra ra ra' over and over, that's where the connection is.

ccxxxv [obligatory Sakuraba penis joke]

ccxxxvi Not quite sure what specific model it would be, but I suspect the point is simply that it's American.

ccxxxvii Uryuu.

ccxxxviii Not that the other choice is simpler to examine: somehow, despite going to the hokora being unavoidable at least in the final release, and being woven inextricably in the whole of the route including the scene where the choice takes place, he acts as if he had never been to the hokora before in the 'right' ending not the next day.

ccxxxix Not as flowing as Shikanon, but just to highlight a difference between the originator and the derivative, Taiyouko doesn't require discarding 95% of the events seen throughout the story as sheer groundless fantasy, as Shikanon does. This despite Cross Channel having a trump card that allows to do so that's actually *intentional*, unlike the Folding of the Cheese and the free reign it gives to redefine words, insert arbitrary actions and discard the solutions given, simultaneously demonstrating that Ryukishi doesn't think things through as well as failing to understand a Wikipedia-level definition of *logic puzzle*. This is around where I believe Ryukishi began going wrong in his reading: *without love it can't be seen*, which I strongly believe to be a backtranslation of the CS Lewis quote at the start of the book, doesn't refer to the way through which to see Taiyouko; we'll see it refers to something different entirely, something that has to do with the deepest interpretation of the story, and the likely source of much of the characterization of the people in Cross Channel.

ccxl While a sizable portion of it is explainable in this sense, not all of it can. It's still meandering and repetitive, reads like a hastily expanded draft at times, and I consider the final rant against Youko to be the worst part of Cross Channel with regards to writing. That ugly, clunky, trite “for the sake of” line (now lines) is the single worst piece of writing in the entire VN in sheer mistiming alone.

ccxli The original line even highlights this word, which is transliterated in hiragana instead of the more typical katakana, in brackets.

ccxlii He's been chained and drugged in bed for *days*, then he just gets up and even dares Youko to try to take him? This better be intended as metaphorical.

ccxliii In short, the entire Youko Sendback route is Taichi sitting at home waxing emo and masturbating. Well, they can't all be winners.

ccxliv Other meanings, kanji aside: "the sorting of coal" and "the elixir of life". ~~It's white and sticky as everyone knows.~~

ccxlv Which would make the total count 16 people, 1+6=**7**.

ccxlvi While much of the parody of tired eroge writing that make up one of the many undercurrents of Cross Channel, and especially of Another Story, are impossible to directly represent in English, there's at least the... less than stellar quality of a good deal of translations to imitate. Stylistic Suck rushes in where purple prose fears to tread.

ccxlvii In the Materials Book interview, Tanaka says that Nanaka is nothing but illusion. In Another Story, which first appeared *not a few pages before that interview*, Taichi claims he could never incarnate a presence. If it's not clear yet, Tanaka can be very very mean with the way he expresses the truth. Even when the truth it is: an illusion and a "presence" are not quite the same thing.

ccxlviii I'm trying to read this as something *not* dirty, but I have stared too long at eroge and "Tomoki helped Taichi insert a different disk" is a single entendre now. Sigh...

ccxlix "He sent her away" after that mess in the theater, let's say. Like he does before her final talk with Kiri; yet, if he lets himself be "killed", there she is. It's all metaphorical, of course, since she doesn't exist, but it's something to wonder about.

ccl Similarly the new scene added in her route in the cafeteria, where she talks on and on semi-incomprehensibly and semi-coherently while Taichi doesn't understand a word, doesn't comment,

nor does she even ask him for comments. That's an only somewhat exaggerated version of what he does himself.

ccli Consider the difference between how Ryukishi discussed people not 'getting' Umineko with Tanaka going years seemingly never saying a word about Cross Channel, despite Umineko being likely better understood than Cross Channel.

cclii I can say with a straight face that I've watched two hentai OVAs for research purposes. Truly I have seen everything this life has to offer, and can now die in peace.

ccliii *Technically* a Reality Marble isn't True Magic in the Nasu sense, but this isn't the Nasuverse either, so it's just a similarity (in other words *there's no need to fanwank specifics on this dammit*).

ccliv The knife in Tsukihime is inscribed with Shiki's real last name, Nanaya – *seven nights*. No need to say more at this point, hopefully.

cclv Hence the reference to a "seminal" (cough) Kagetsu Tohya doujinishi I make in the translation, doujinshi which originated the meme "a X is fine too" (which is still a fairly literal translation of the original line, so even if you don't get the reference it works). Sakuraba being the one to say that line is just the cherry on top, really. It's not the only Nasuverse doujinishi reference I made: did you spot the other? It's even quoted in this monograph. Also: the Fate/Stay Night fandisc Fate/Hollow Ataraxia (published years after Cross Channel, therefore not a possible source of inspiration) does have a more “real” looped world, and connecting to the “reality marble” similarity, it partially runs on True Magic concepts. For the [division by zero error] who care.

cclvi It's really a side note, but the similarities with Tsukihime actually go as far as the soundtrack: compare Cross Channel's *Silence* and *Fated* to Tsukihime's *Illusionary Dance* , or *Crisscross* with Tsukihime's *Tsukihime*); and while we're there, we gotta compare Starry Heavens with Higurashi Kai's *Over the Sky* and the equivalent from Umineko, *As Time Goes By* . Or the same song with the opening of Pink Floyd's *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* (cough cough synth opening, then piano/guitar theme all in free tempo cough).

cclvii For someone even passably educated, the difference between something written difficult because *the content* is difficult and something written difficult to reduce the amount of people who can easily see there is *no* content is blindingly obvious. I have met the latter so often and the former so rarely that I am personally strongly against the use of this kind of language and go to lengths to avoid it myself, as can be seen by the random penis jokes around here. In fact, Cross Channel is the only example of this kind of language being used in service of *actual* depth I can think off the top of my head, or at least that it isn't a great many decades if not centuries old. And even I was skeptical until nearly halfway through my first read, because its use of complex writing as a form of parody is invisible until fairly late in the analysis.

cclviii And because this is an eroge: yay! Selfcest!

cclix Though going by much of the Internet most don't outgrow it even in the West, especially mentally.

cclx And it's of course a phallic symbol. I wonder if doing that sort of thing means anything psychologically speaking... naaah can't be.

cclxi And let's not joke around here, what I'm saying isn't here is *pretentious allegorical bullshit*.

cclxii Take Fate/Stay Night villain Kotomine's inability to even begin to understand why evil would feel wrong and good not feel fully right: from that, I must conclude the Church in the Nasuverse is too busy torturing people for suspect immortality and forming teams of more or less magic-powered badasses to teach complicated and advanced parts of Christian philosophy like "the fallen nature of Man" and "obedience to God" *to their own priests*. Or to put it in another way, it's pretty obvious that Kinoko Nasu does not understand Christianity even at a C.S. Lewis level and that his writings do not reflect a Christian viewpoint, let alone a religious one in general.

cclxiii Did I mention how Cross Channel both relies on how predictable people are and portrays them as predictable? There's a reason why this works so well. The same reason why it creates characters so believable.

cclxiv That's justifiable even more than the half-handwaving the author makes in the Materials Book interview, as we'll see – yes, we're not remotely done with intersecting and overlapping stuff!

cclxv That has been my experience as well, and I'm far from alone in this. That's how I immediately recognized the metaphor.

cclxvi A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Which then inspired Pinocchio and ...

cclxvii Consider especially verses 37-40 when examining the non-explicit religiousness of Cross Channel, and how Taichi never really says much that is explicitly Christian.

cclxviii Speaking of which, I wonder if it was intentional or a slip of the tongue when he has Taichi claim that the handshake is a "sign of peace": that's not only not a typical gesture for the Japanese, but it's odd for *anyone* to define the handshake as such... outside of a Catholic, as the exchange of a sign of peace (a handshake) is part of the mass. There's not that many denominations in Japan, I believe, but this makes me suspect Tanaka is specifically Catholic.

cclxix Not that there's need to go that far, since he considers taking the key from the kouban as stealing, even if he has no reason whatsoever to do so.

cclxx Of course, the portal appears only on Sunday and it's *Friday* when he does this, but let's say even the *possible* presence of the portal is gone rather than it being a possible plot hole (it's simply not sufficiently clear).

cclxxi No, I didn't buy them. I don't think even J-List imports them. A tin of them pretty much fell in my lap one day around a month before release. Odd coincidence.

cclxxii In the interview, Tanaka also says he's started eating it after getting "fairly big". Given this, I suspect this growing up is more spiritual than physical.

cclxxiii On the other hand, I have no idea what's up with the mint that recurs from Yusa's diary to Kiri's scent during the chase to the soap used on him in the rooftop cleaning scene.

cclxxiv As this line is no strictly contextualized it's *technically* necessary to translate this line as lower-g god, but the conclusion of which God it is remains unchanged.

cclxxv I suspect it's because Jesus' sacrifice is in the end a *self*-sacrifice from God himself. Not that Frodo doesn't somehow live through what should've killed him, but given he leaves with Gandalf and the elves, his may not have been *exactly* survival. It's not even the greatest issue here, given how the split I would make is far from the only one out there – some put Sam instead of Frodo, some completely reject the split and instead point at Gandalf as a more explicit Jesus character. But the specific nature of this is less relevant than the *presence* of elements of Jesus in these characters, which is undeniable, as well as the *complexity* of their presence and the *depth* at which they are found.

cclxxvi And I doubt Humanity Has Declined is, as well.

cclxxvii Curiously enough, Magicians in the Nasuverse themselves have parallels with those, mainly their extreme powerfulness and equal rarity. No idea how intentional this may have been.

cclxxviii Not in the font of the VN, unfortunately. Technical issues and all.

cclxxix Double Aught Software, makers of Marathon Infinity, had the infinity symbol as their logo. This I can chalk up to a coincidence, as said it's not uncommon, but it's neat regardless.

cclxxx As at least part of the depth in characterization is dependent on the reader paying a ridiculous amount of attention to the actual relationship the characters have on screen, it's an issue that's still kind of the elephant in the room when it comes to Cross Channel.

cclxxxi The original line, *Kurosu-chan neru*, is pronounced the same as Cross Channel. But since on the seventh week Taichi rests, the sleeping is more important than the pun.

cclxxxii Even if she never existed, she was something *human* of Taichi's, and with it, necessarily something of the demonic. If she existed, then she was stuck in a sort of purgatory until Taichi learned enough to forgive her (and she gave in, because she could *still* have killed Taichi there and then). What she'll do afterwards is anyone's guess, hers included.

cclxxxiii YES! UNTRANSLATED ITALIAN! Suck my haughty pretentiousness! Wooo!

cclxxxiv Hence the first suggestion of Sakuraba's on the rooftop: an elaborated term for *hell*. Was Inferno Channel an early considered name?

cclxxxv As far as the very square hole of Japanese can be made to fit the very round peg of thirteen century pre-Italian. I'm not even criticizing here, just recognizing the difficulty of the task.

cclxxxvi Although there is (or rather, was) a prefecture of that name in Japan , it appears of little relevance compared to this relatively simple metainterpretation.

cclxxxvii Specifically that he may also be an Hellsing character. The series began 1997, same time as this scene takes place, so I can't be certain it's a coincidence. Not that it would change anything, because even if Hellsing were the reference, Father Anderson in Hellsing is *still* a Christian priest and the point is still his vocation.

cclxxxviii ...whether Misato meant that in the 'other', English sense is hard to tell. It'd fit her that she would, however.

cclxxxix This is somewhat tongue-in-cheek, but it's ultimately not hostile. There's no snippy anti-Americanism to be found in Cross Channel, which is as unlikely as the religious references being by and large Christian.

ccxc And then the character of Prussia goes and has white/silver hair, red eyes with a weirdness in them (heterocromia), a big ego, is yet "unexpectedly fairy-tale like" and keeps a diary. At this point I blame time travel.

ccxci Denying Young Earth Creationism... or so it seems. Hey, remember how only Western years were relevant? That's because Year Zero in Cross Channel is of course the birth of Jesus.

ccxcii Metaphor or not, he's a reverse weeaboo. How's that for ironic, considering how much of a superficial and poorly-educated person he is?

ccxciii And check the dates on the Wikipedia page. It's a very topical reference... for September 1998.

ccxciv He's got the American stereotype down in ignorance at least; of course the stereotype of ignorant American is very American itself. (Plus he's Japanese.)

ccxcv And so, the true meaning of “lolicon is a disease” is finally clear: it's a warning to the world to just go and finance ~~Japan~~ Nipponia's Experimental Growth Serum, and end the threat to mankind that is the existence of girls between 12 and 18. I'm sorta ambivalent, because you just *know* it's gonna end up with a side effect of making some women into giantesses.

ccxcvi Consider Umineko, one last time. Although some of the concepts of *fiction as escape from a bad reality* do appear in there, they have a repulsive subtext of escape from an *uncomfortable* reality, rather than escape from a *philosophical prison*. This is even more conjecture than most things here, given that it's technically not relevant in the slightest, so take it as you will: from the way Umineko (and late Higurashi) apes many of Cross Channel's most complex parts – mostly bluntly and artlessly I'll add – but ultimately fails to reproduce anything of its religious component outside a truckload of out-of-context Bible quotes and semi-random Dante references, I suspect Ryukishi's understanding of Cross Channel to be incomplete. I speculate the reason is that he didn't do the whole analysis on his own as I did: I wouldn't be surprised if Tanaka more or less explained to him most of the details of the lower interpretations, and then simply told him to read some Lewis, Tolkien, Dante and the Bible, and figure out the rest himself. He certainly did the reading, I'll give him that. However, he betrays his disappointingly inadequate conclusions when he uses *without love it can't be seen* to highlight a confusing and contradictory plot device, rather than as the key to interpreting the *forgiveness* at the heart of the characterization, and therefore loses most of the deeper layers Cross Channel instead as. Speculation, as said, but this is one of the many reasons I consider Umineko to be an inferior imitation.

...the others would add nearly 800 words to this, and that'd be the absolute bare-bones stream-of-consciousness recap. Let's say that having my brain switched on while reading it made me hate Umineko's near-perfect storm of stupidity with the fiery passion of a thousand trillion suns *factorial*.